ELEGANT EDWARD

BY

EDGAR WALLACE

Elegant Edward

I THE RUM-RUNNER

THERE is this about every man who gets his living by his wits: he is at the mercy of wits that are shrewder and brighter.

Elegant Edward (as Mr. Edward Farthindale was respectfully called) was police-proof. He could meet the suspicious eyes of a harassed constabulary without so much as a blink. He could answer peremptory summonses to police headquarters with a good conscience, for his many nefarious deeds were, if not within the law, at least so close to the border-line that an agile man could frisk to safety at the first hint of danger.

Not so was Scotty Ferguson, who was a low thief and an opener of lock-up shops in the absence of their owners. To say that Edward knew him would be to do too much honour to Scotty. They were on distant nodding terms, having both worked in the same laundry at Wormwood Scrubs, to which place of detention Edward had once been consigned as a result of a gross miscarriage of justice. At least, that is what he told almost everybody.

He had met Scotty "outside"; had nodded coldly to him and passed on, for Scotty was out of his class. He had seen Scotty in the same saloon bar, and had gravely inclined his head to the little man's salute. For Edward did not like the Scotch. In fact, he disliked them most intensely. They had cost him money.

So that when returning from his afternoon constitutional in the park he found. Scotty waiting for him on his doorstep, he was both surprised and indignant.

"Heard about your trouble over the motor-cars, Mr. Farthindale," smiled Scotty ingratiatingly, "and I thought I'd come round and congratulate ye."

Elegant Edward had certainly had "trouble"—trouble that took him to the Old Bailey, where a flaw in the indictment had, on appeal, saved him from 18 months' vacation.

"Oh, you did, did you?" he said ungraciously. "Well, I'm much obliged, I'm sure."

He would have gone into his lodgings, but Scotty was not to be denied.

"I've got something for you, Mr. Farthindale—a fortune," he said.

Edward sneered.

"I've never known a Scotsman to give away a fortune yet," he said. "The little I've seen of 'em, it's been the other way about!"

"You've been unfortunate, Mr. Farthindale," said Scotty humbly. He was a small, freckled man with a slight squint, and when he was humble he seemed to shrink a couple of inches.

"Besides," Edward went on, "from what I know of you, Scotty, you never had a fortune to give away. You get your living by what is vulgarly called by common people 'snouting,' and I don't want to have anything to do with a snout*!"

[* Snout—"nose" or police informer.]

"I'd like to know who's been casting asparagus on my character," said Scotty tremulously. I'd have 'em up in court!"

"And when you're not snouting," continued Edward remorselessly, "you're doing in poor fellows who work hard at their game."

Scotty made inarticulate noises.

"Can I see you for ten minutes?" he pleaded at last. "This is the biggest thing I've ever had. The man that owns the yacht is as straight as you are, Mr. Farthindale—and if I'm telling you lies, may ..."

He suggested to Providence a few penalties which might come to his eyes, his body and his soul. Edward was momentarily impressed.

"I can't see you now, my good man," he said. "Come to me at five o'clock—but I warn you that you're wasting your time if you put up anything that's dishonest or low."

Scotty left him, and at the corner of Acre Street picked up a compatriot and a sympathiser, Sandy Brown.

"It will be like pulling marbles off a sleeping bairn," he said complacently. "I like these London crooks—they're easy."

Sandy grunted. He was a tall, gaunt man, well but quietly dressed, and a stranger to the Metropolis.

"I'm no' so sure," he said. "Maybe he'll be nairvous of the sea."

"We'll find out," said Scotty with an air of quiet confidence.

At five o'clock that evening he made his call, and Edward, cold and sceptical, listened to his opening remarks without enthusiasm.

"Gun running?" he said, startled.

"Rum," corrected the other. "There's a million in it. And there's no risk. My friend will lend the yacht for a quarter share in the profits and pay the crew. You'll be in charge, and take the money. Are you a good sailor, Mr. Farthindale?"

"One," said Edward promptly, "of the best."

It was absurd to expect him to make a claim to be less, for Elegant Edward had no illusions about his own qualities. Moreover, he had once sailed in a barge from London River to Belfast, and had experienced no ill effects. He often boasted of that trip. Scotty had heard him.

"I've made several voyages," he said modestly. "In fact, the sea is my home.

I've been the only man on board ship that wasn't ill."

Which, also, Scotty had heard before, without understanding. Edward did not explain that he was the only man on the barge that hadn't eaten the tinned salmon that prostrated the captain, mate and boy who constituted the barge's crew.

"If it's anything in the seafaring line I'm there," he said simply. "But I still don't see what you want me to do."

"The point is this, Mr. Farthindale," said Scotty with great earnestness. "Here's a chance of picking up a fortune, so to speak, without the chance of any come-back."

Elegant Edward stroked his chin thoughtfully. He was, in truth, looking for a fortune that would be unaccompanied by that come-back, which had recently taken the form of an indictment. Whilst one Lummy Chalker, a famous stealer of motor-cars, was meditating pensively within the drab walls of Wormwood Scrubs, he, his partner, was at liberty, and, moreover (this to the disgust of the police) in possession of a considerable sum of money obtained by nefarious means.

Elegant Edward had stood in the presence of a magistrate before, but never had he faced an Old Bailey jury, and the memory of that experience never failed to make him shudder.

"This is a perfectly legal business, Mr. Farthindale," Scotty went on. "It's trade—and nothing but trade."

"Isn't there a law against selling whisky to Americans?"

"There is one in America," said Sandy.

Elegant Edward twirled the waxed ends of his moustache more thoughtfully than ever.

"The point is, Mr. Scott," he said, "and I'll put it plainly—frankness being a vice of mine—there's something about you Scotsmen I don't like. I've been diddled so often that I don't like taking the risk. How do I know, when I buy this whisky, that I'm going to get my money back?"

Scotty shook his head sorrowfully.

"It hurts me to hear you say that, Mr. Farthindale," he said. "I've never double-crossed a pal in my life, and I'm not going to start now. And besides, the only money you put into it is the money you spend for the whisky. I've got the

yacht, and when it comes to the question of money, I'm putting more into the scheme than you. Besides, you'll be there to take the stuff. My idea is this: We'll run across the Atlantic in about twenty-one days, anchor four or five miles from Newport, and the boot-leggers will come out on motor-boats, take off the stuff and pay us, and we'll be back in England under eight weeks. A thousand pounds' worth of stuff will bring us in eight or ten thousand. I ask you, is it worth while?"

"It seems easy," said Elegant Edward after considerable cogitation. "But suppose we're caught outside?"

"They can't catch you outside the three-mile limit," said Scotty.

"I'll think it over," said Elegant Edward.

He thought the matter over for the greater part of a fortnight, and the scheme seemed more and more attractive; in addition to which there was in the job a certain amount of that kudos which attached to the buccaneers of the Spanish Main. He could imagine himself strolling along Regent Street, a gallant and elegant figure, with the air of nonchalance which genius wears so naturally, and people pointing him out to one another in awe-stricken whispers: "That is Farthindale, the great rum-runner. They say he's worth a million!" And he pictured himself in a party, surrounded by beautiful ladies, begging him to tell them the story of his adventures, ashore and afloat. There was the romance dear to his soul in this proposition. And he had the necessary thousand—or credit to that amount.

Elegant Edward had a friend, a Mr. Cummings, who kept a newspaper shop and was, in consequence, an authority upon the happenings of the day. To him he repaired, to learn more of this mystic method by which money could be so easily gained, and Cummings's report was most enthusiastic.

"They're making millions in America out of whisky. It's called rum-running, owing to the Americans not knowing rum from real drink."

He told Elegant Edward a number of stories which made that gentleman's mouth water; for Mr. Cummings had had the good fortune to be acquainted with a retired publican who now, thanks to the introduction of prohibitive measures, had acquired so great a fortune that he was the owner of three motor-cars, a country house, and other possessions which need not be particularized. Edward went home impressed.

He had a little office off Regent Street which cost him twelve shillings a week and was well worth the money; for here, by turns, he was private detective, merchant and quack doctor. Twenty-four hours after considering his scheme

he had become an exporter of spirituous liquors, and had opened his negotiations with a wholesale firm in Glasgow, using for the purpose the brand-new note-heading that he had had printed in the interval.

It was on the third day that Elegant Edward was taken by Scotty to Southend, and the yacht pointed out to him. It was a large vessel, that had the appearance of a bloated fishing-smack, and it was not exactly in accordance with Edward's notion of what a yacht should be, because it looked the kind of yacht that wouldn't roll or stand on its head, or do any of the things that sailing vessels do, according to the story-books; and, moreover, it was much bigger than the barge.

"She's got a screw, an auxiliary engine, a motor," explained Scotty. "You can go down Channel when there's not a breath of wind; and once you get into the Atlantic, why, you're over there before you know you've started. And, by jingo! Mr. Farthindale, we're in luck—here's the skipper."

A tall, gaunt man in seafaring uniform was approaching them. He knuckled his cap to Scotty.

"Good morning, Captain Brown. This is my friend, Mr. Edward Farthindale, who's thinking of taking a little trip across the Pond."

"Glad to meet you, sir," said the skipper in a sepulchral tone. "I've taken the liberty of having your cabin done up, though I haven't heard a word from Mr. Scott as to whether you were coming or not. It's all right, then, is it?"

Scotty nodded gravely.

"We'll have the goods on board by Tuesday evening," he said, lowering his voice and glancing left and right like a conspirator.

Elegant Edward had a pleasant thrill. It reminded him of those smuggling stories he had seen at the cinema. Undoubtedly there was something very dashing and unusually fascinating in this new method of earning a living,

"Yes, sir, I've made the trip twenty times," said the gaunt seaman; "and I don't mind telling you that I've made so much money that I needn't take another. But it's the life that attracts me, the same as it attracts a gentleman like you. The adventure, so to speak—though," he added hastily, when he saw Edward's face drop, "it's not what you would call dangerous adventure."

"Is she a good sailing ship?" asked Edward, regarding the yacht dubiously.

"One of the very best. In fact, I don't know a better. She's not so steady as the Berengaria, but a better sea ship than the Mauretania. I don't know whether

your cabin will suit you; it's the largest on the ship, but we'll have to put a new easy chair in. Would you prefer a pink or a blue eiderdown on your bed, sir? The last gentleman we took over couldn't bear pink. And he could only drink 1911 Mumm. But we've got a better cellar now."

Edward's mind was almost made up. When he returned that evening and found a pleasant note from the whisky factor, telling him that his esteemed inquiry had been received and that, on a cash payment of £600, they were prepared to supply him with whisky to twice that amount, f.o.b. Glasgow, he took his decision.

He concentrated all his money into one bank, drew a cheque with a hand that trembled slightly, and sent it off to Glasgow, though that was the last city in the world he ever wanted to send money to. In the interval the gaunt captain came up to see him, a fine figure of a man in a blue jersey and a peaked cap, and certain little details of the voyage were settled. For example: what Edward would like for breakfast; what hour would be agreeable to him for dinner; and would he like to ship a valet, or would one of the hands do? He received notification that the whisky had arrived in London, and made his final preparations.

"The best way of getting it to Southend," said Scotty, who was evidently an authority on these matters, "is to load it on to trolleys in London, and send it down to the ship so that it gets there a little after dark. We don't want any American spies nosing round and finding what we're doing; that would never do."

"I'd like to have a look at this whisky," said Edward, and went down himself to a bonded warehouse, and saw a most imposing array of white boxes, bearing a label which is dear to many hearts.

The following afternoon he superintended the loading of the cases, and late that night arrived at Southend and was met at the station by the mysterious Scotty.

"Has that stuff turned up?"

"Every drop, and we've got it on board," said Scotty. "Your luck's in, Mr. Farthindale. There was a bit of a mist on the water, and we were able to ship the stuff without anybody prying and spying, but we've still got to be careful. I'll carry your bag if you don't mind, Mr. Farthindale. No, no; don't take a cab, we'll walk; it's not very far."

Edward had come equipped for the journey with two large Gladstone bags. Scotty's wardrobe, as he explained, was already on board.

"I'm going with you," he said, "because I want to see that you're not swindled. There's a lot of bad American money in circulation, and you being a stranger they might take you in."

When they reached the edge of the estuary it was very dark, and the lights the shipping showed blurred through the river mist. A small row-boat was waiting, in which sat Captain Brown.

"Everything's on board, sir," he said respectfully as he touched his cap. "We'll be all ready to slip with the tide."

"Aye, aye," said Elegant Edward nautically.

It was a beautiful yacht. He hadn't realized how beautiful it was. The saloon into which he was shown might have been the saloon of a palace, with its rosewood and its silver lamps and elegant cushions.

"I don't see any of the crew about," said Edward.

"They're having their supper forrard," said Captain Brown. "I'll muster them in the morning and you can have a little talk with them. There's nothing like the owner getting acquainted with the crew."

Edward, muffled up in his overcoat, stood on the deck, and felt the shiver of a little screw under his feet, as the Saucy Polly slipped down into the fairway. The sea was not as smooth as it might have been, and the Saucy Polly had a trick of rocking as though it was consumed with internal laughter. Elegant Edward, gripping tight to the rail, allowed his regretful thoughts to stray to a very comfortable bed-sitting-room that was steady in any kind of weather.

"I think I'll go below," he said, and the Captain and Mr. Scott showed him into the boudoir where he was to sleep.

"And now," said Scotty, as they returned to the deck, "I think we might say good-bye to that poor mackerel."

Captain Brown set the nose of the boat to the open sea, locked the wheel and drew the row-boat which was trailing behind, to the side of the ship.

"That's Margate," he said, pointing to a twinkle of lights. "We ought to be able to row there in an hour."

Edward's cabin surpassed in loveliness the big saloon. The bed was soft, and comfortable—or would have been if the floor of the cabin would only stay still long enough to give it a chance. Elegant Edward found himself jazzing from one side of the cabin to the other, and finally, grabbing the rail of the bed,

waited for a propitious moment and literally fell into it.

His sleep was disturbed by dreams: he dreamt he was standing under the Eiffel Tower in an earthquake, and little bits of iron were dropping on him. This horrid vision changed rapidly, and he found himself walking up the side of a house. And all the time the house was swaying gently from side to side. Suddenly his feet left the wall and he fell down, down, down, and struck the ground with such violence that he woke up, smarting.

He was rolling along the floor of the cabin, which alternately staggered to the right and dithered to the left. Pulling himself to his feet, his face green, his head splitting, he crawled to the door and up the companion ladder. There was no land in sight; more terrifying, there was no sign of the crew.

Far away across the tumbling waves he saw a little black launch belching smoke, and apparently making in his direction. A horrible fear assailed him. Suppose the ship was run down? He staggered along the deck to where he had seen the wheel, but the wheel was unattended.

"Scotty!" he yelled. "Captain Brown!"

Only the shriek of the whirling sea-birds answered him.

Elegant Edward sat down violently on the deck. He was alone at sea; alone in the midst of the desolate waters! All the yacht's sails were stowed, and she was riding in the trough of the sea, her engine having ceased to function.

Where was the captain and owner of the yacht? Perhaps he was at breakfast. Elegant Edward fell down some stairs, traversed a narrow passage which smote him violently at irregular intervals, and came to the saloon. It was empty.

By the time he had got on to the deck, the little steamboat he had seen was within hailing distance. Somebody was yelling at him through a megaphone, and presently the launch came alongside and a uniformed man jumped on board.

"Where are your pals?" he asked without preliminary.

"I—I don't know," stammered Edward. "Do you want them?"

"I should say I wanted them," said the Thames policeman, glowering at him. "I want you for stealing this yacht, the property of Lord Fallowgill."

"But it belongs to a friend of mine," said Elegant Edward faintly.

"He's no friend of yours, I can tell you that," said the grim man in buttons.

"But I'm rum-running," said Elegant Edward wildly. "I've got hundreds of cases of whisky in the hold."

The man frowned and looked at him.

"We'll find that out," he said, and called a friend from the boat.

His investigations took him exactly ten minutes, and when he returned:

"There's nothing in the hold but ballast," he said. "Come along, my son!"

* * * * *

In and old stable-yard in the East End of London stood a loaded lorry covered with a tarpaulin, and to this, in the early hours of next morning, came Mr. Scotty Ferguson and Mr. Sandy Brown, and with them one called Isaacsheim.

"There it is, Issy," said Scotty; "a thousand pounds' worth. It's all ready to be shipped, and all I'm asking is three hundred—loaded up and ready to be carted away."

"Where did you get it?" asked Mr. Isaacsheim.

"I got it from a rum-runner," said Scotty. "One of the cleverest fellows in the business. It's all straight and paid for."

"Where is the rum-runner?" asked Issy.

Scotty wiped his eyes with the back of his hand.

"He's no longer with us," he said brokenly.

II. — MR. MACMILLAN SHARES HIS POSSESSIONS

ELEGANT EDWARD, not without reason, had a sense of animosity towards the Scottish people. He did not tell Mr. Alexander Macmillan, jute lord, whisky lord and shipping duke, that he harboured any such ill-feeling. It would have been inexpedient.

Mr. Macmillan was a hard-faced, thin-haired man, who wore horn-rimmed spectacles and an air of gloom. He lived with his numerous family in Grosvenor Square, when he was not shooting in Scotland with his numerous family, or taking his numerous family to Monte Carlo that they might see with

their own eyes the foolish way in which the Southron wasted his money.He was a philanthropist, a keen patriot, and when he was not signing cheques he was writing letters to the newspapers protesting against the employment of the word "English" where "British" was intended.

Elegant Edward went to him with a most attractive, indeed an imperial scheme. There had come into his possession the option on a bleak and profitless ranch situated in the rockiest part of the Canadian Rockies. An advertisement in the agony column of a London newspaper had excited his curiosity, and he had got in touch with the "Canadian rancher," to discover that a vast tract of land was purchasable for a ridiculously low sum. He had interviewed the hardy son of the wilds, a gentleman named Isidor Abraham, and for the sum of £20 cash had obtained an option. This fact he did not reveal to Mr. Macmillan as he sat opposite that gentleman in his study.

"This is a scheme that I've had for years in the back of my mind," said Edward impressively and enthusiastically. "To found a new Scotland, if you understand me rightly, Mr. Macmillan, in the free and fearless West! There is everything there, sir, to make a Scotsman feel at home; there's hills and valleys and rippling streams—you can build a brig or two for the cost of a song—there's oatmeal growing wild, and deer-stalking and salmon-fishing; in fact, everything that the heart of us Scotch can desire."

"Are you Scottish?" grated Mr. Macmillan, glaring at him through his horn--rimmed spectacles.

"I am, and proud of it," said Edward solemnly. "I was born in the Highlands of Edinburgh, my mother was a Stuart and my father was a piper."

Mr. Macmillan sniffed incredulously, and Elegant Edward went on to a less dangerous topic.

"Now my idea, sir," he said confidentially, as he leaned across the table and beamed upon the millionaire, "is to found a new town called Macmillanville, or, maybe, Macmillanburg, or just Macmillan. It's a matter of taste. Send out a lot of Scotch people—highlanders, pipers, crofters, and other natives—build a town—"

"Where do you come in?" asked Mr. Macmillan.

"My idea," said Edward carefully, "was to pass the property on to you. You can have this great estate for twelve thousand pounds—"

Mr. Macmillan raised his hand wearily.

"It was offered to me for fifteen hundred last week," he said. "When I was in

Canada I could have got it for five hundred. And even five hundred would have been four hundred and fifty pounds too much! I know the place: it is about ten miles from my own ranch in Alberta. Will you go quietly, or shall I send for the police?"

Elegant Edward went quietly.

It was that evening he met Lummy Chalker. Lummy Chalker was the type of man whom, ordinarily, Mr. Farthindale would have passed on the other side of the street. For Lummy was a larcenist of a most vulgar type. And, whatever else he was, Elegant Edward was a gentleman. At least, he got a lot of pleasure from thinking of himself that way. But times were hard, and misfortune produces not only strange bedfellows, it also produces stranger partnerships.

Elegant Edward knew Lummy by sight and, occasionally, in his more affable mood, favoured him with that slight inclination of head which is the hallmark of superiority and patronage. Lummy, for his part, seemed unconscious either of the condescension or the need for better acquaintance, until he, too, fell upon evil days. It would be perhaps more accurate to say evil months—nine of the worst, with the usual remission for good conduct—and the night he left His Majesty's Home for Incurable Optimists, situate at Pentonville in the County of London, they met—he and Elegant Edward—in the saloon bar of the "Cow and Cucumber."

"There ought to be a lore," said Lummy Chalker bitterly, as he searched his pockets for the necessary halfpenny to make up the price of a pint, "dividing property so that everybody gets a whack. I'm a Socialist, Mr. Farthindale; in fact, I'm a Bolshevik. Look around you in the streets: look at the fellows lolling about with millions, while poor blighters like me haven't got sixpence-ha'penny! What chance has a working man got, I ask you?"

"None," admitted Edward between his teeth.

He thought savagely of the immense wealth of the plutocratic Macmillan and his own comparative poverty. Ordinarily, Elegant Edward was a staunch Conservative with a profound contempt for democracy; but things had happened lately—

"They don't give you a chance of getting a bit of capital together," said Lummy, gazing disconsolately into the depths of his pewter pot. "That's what I've always suffered from—lack of capital. I've had to be scrimping and saving, and that's why I've always been caught. Now with a bit of capital, I'd have twenty thousand pounds in my right-hand pocket within three months."

Edward looked at him with a new interest.

"How do you mean, Mr. Chalker?"

"I mean this way," said Lummy. "I'm a knocker-off..."

He went on to explain his scheme, and Mr. Farthindale listened attentively. Presently he asked:

"Do you know a Scotch chap, called Macmillan, who lives in Grosvenor Place?"

"Know him?" said the other contemptuously, "I should say I did! He's two Rolls, a Daimler, and a Sunbeam! Do I know him!"

Mr. Chalker invariably thought of people in terms of their swiftly movable possessions. He was a "knocker-off" of motor-cars; in other words, he was one of the many who gained a precarious livelihood by strolling negligently up to a car which had been left parked in the street, without any visible attendant, slipping into the driver's seat and driving off boldly in broad daylight, later to convert his capture into cash. For in London there are at least ten depots to which a stolen car can be taken. The number on the chassis was scientifically changed, certain structural alterations were made, new bonnets were ruthlessly substituted and new bodies fitted. Lummy, who had been a chauffeur during the war, was one of the most able practitioners in the business; but, as he truly said, he had suffered from a lack of capital.

"I am inclined to agree with you, Mr. Chalker," said Elegant Edward earnestly. "The money in this country isn't distributed enough. It's in too few hands. It's disgraceful that a foreigner like Macmillan should have all that stuff, and you and me have none. Thieving I don't approve of. I have been in stir, I admit, but it was due to a miscarriage of justice, as everybody knows. But I feel so strongly against this man, Macmillan, that I think we ought to do something to make him divide, so to speak, his possessions. What do you want capital for?" he asked practically.

Lummy Chalker explained.

"The best way of getting rid of a car that's been knocked off, is to sell it to somebody in the Colonies. After you get the machine home, the thing to do is to fudge the chassis number, give the body a new coat of paint, put it in a packing-case and send it down to the docks. You ship it either to Cape Town or Melbourne, or maybe India. You can always sell at a good price if you hang round some of the big hotels where these Colonials live; get into touch with them, let them see the car as soon as it's 'knocked-off'; but sell it to them on the understanding that it's not to be used in London."

"They'll think that funny, won't they?" asked Edward dubiously.

Mr. Lummy Chalker laughed.

"What's easier than telling them it belongs to a lord who's gone broke and doesn't want his friends to see his car knocking about London in somebody else's hands?" he asked. "That tale always fetches Colonials. Let them see the car, give them a private run with it some evening after dark, and have it packed and shipped before their eyes. You make more money than by taking it to a fence, because a fence will only give you fifty quid for a Rolls-Royce."

Elegant Edward scratched his chin thoughtfully.

"It costs a bit to hang around big hotels," he said.

"Well, you can advertise," urged Lummy. "Buy a little car, so that, if the 'busies'* see the advertisement, you've always got something to show 'em. I know you're not a 'tea-leaf,'† Mr. Farthindale; you're like me. You believe in things being divided fair. And there's money in this—a packet of money. And this Macmillan will be easy. He's got a garage at the back of his house—and the nights he goes to the theatre it'll be dead easy to 'knock-off' one of his flivvers."

[* busy: a detective

† tea-leaf: Cockney rhyming slang for "thief".]

"This must be thought about," said Elegant Edward quietly. Three weeks later....

Mr. Edward Farthindale inserted an advertisement in the morning newspaper. It was a simple, alluring, and at the same time, honest advertisement.

"Gentleman about to leave England for abroad would like to dispose of a motor-car, almost new. Would suit Colonial."

And when an inquiring C.I.D. man came nosing for trouble, Elegant Edward could meet him with a bland smile and a clear conscience.

"It's all right, Mr. Lambert—I've gone into the motor-car business. Honesty is the best policy, as dear old Shakespeare says."

"How long have you been a gentleman about to leave England, or, for the matter of that," asked the sceptical Sergeant Lambert, "a gentleman at all?"

"It's what I might term a courtesy title," said Elegant Edward easily. "I'm leaving England, that's a fact. For Scotland. And that is 'abroad' to me. Would

you like to see the flivver?"

"I would," said the detective.

Elegant Edward had been at breakfast when his visitor came. But at breakfast or in bed, Edward was the perfect gentleman. In his latter situation he wore pink silk pyjamas, neatly folded now on the bed, for Mr. Farthindale enjoyed the shelter of a bed-sitting-room. Now he was dressed in his faultless morning coat and his cravat of sober hue, with an imitation pearl pin to emphasize his gentility. He fitted his glossy silk hat upon his head, with the aid of a mirror, pulled on with annoying deliberation his bright yellow gloves, and conducted the suspicious police officer to a near-by garage, where there reposed a large car, antique of make, but pleasantly painted.

"Here she is, Mr. Lambert," he said proudly, and produced from his pocket a small packet of documents.

"Receipt in order, seventy-five pounds cash I paid the Bunton Garage, and here's my transfer from the County Council. You know where to look for the number of the chassis?"

The detective, an expert in such matters, made a brief examination.

"It seems all right," he said, disappointed. "How long have you been going in for the motor-car business?"

"It's always been an ambition of mine to run a car," said Elegant Edward modestly.

"But what do you mean by 'almost new'? That looks like a fine old antique to me."

Edward smiled pityingly.

"The paint is the newest paint that money can buy," he said. "You've got nothing on me, Mr. Lambert. If you're going to pinch every man that advertises something for sale because it isn't what he says it is, you're going to keep Brixton Gaol so full of tradesmen that there won't be room for an honest lag. No; there's a car that a Colonial gentleman might feel proud of."

"Why Colonial?" asked the detective earnestly.

"They're not so particular," replied Edward.

The detective went back to headquarters and reported.

"It seems to be a straight business," he said to his chief. "Edward has got an

old flivver that he bought at scrap-iron price, and he's trying to sell it."

"Maybe he's going pure," said the chief thoughtfully. "Well, we won't put anything in his way. Besides which, Edward isn't in the 'knocking-off' business, and my experience is that all thieves are specialists and never go outside their own radius."

The truth was that Elegant Edward, so far from being a specialist, was a general practitioner. He had worked every fake, from selling two half-crowns at a country fair for sixpence, to the greatest fake of all, which is running a long-firm business. And now times were hard: he had lost a great deal of hard-earned money through the machinations of an unscrupulous woman; and since men must live—and a top-hat costs threepence to iron—he had, with some reluctance, joined forces with Lummy Chalker.

And the scheme of Lummy Chalker was working beyond Edward's dreams. Three small two-seaters had already been shipped abroad—what time their despairing owners were writing their claims upon car insurance companies—and the prices paid had been exceedingly generous.

He might have avoided the graver risk which the fulfilment of his scheme involved but for a happening which revived all his animosity against the hated Scottish—a hatred which was rapidly disappearing under the beneficent influence of his growing prosperity. One day there came a peremptory message to him from Scotland Yard, and he went, inwardly quaking, for Superintendent Harborough seldom condescended to interfere in the business of thief-taking unless there was something exceptionally serious afoot.

Elegant Edward presented himself, wearing his new wasp-waisted overcoat, and a rare rose in his buttonhole.

"Come in," said Superintendent Harborough, and almost before Elegant Edward was in the room: "You know Mr. Macmillan ?"

"I've met the gentleman," said Edward innocently.

"I heard, quite by accident, that you went into the real estate business and tried to sell him ten miles of Canadian desolation. Now let me warn you, Farthindale"—he lifted his finger ominously—"to confine your operations to the mugs. There are enough of them. I'm not so sure I couldn't take you for fraudulent misrepresentation, and trying to obtain money by false pretences. Fortunately for you, Mr. Macmillan treated the matter as a joke. But as he happens to be a friend of mine, I've sent for you to tell you that, if you try that game again, I'll put you where the dog won't bite you."

Edward went back to his bed-sitting-room seething with indignation, and that night he sought his partner.

"Macmillan?" said Lummy with a frown. "I'd forgotten all about him. I don't like taking these big cars, but if you say so—"

"I do say so," said Elegant Edward firmly, and Lummy Chalker went out to reconnoitre.

He came back to Edward the next morning with a report which was not exactly encouraging.

"Two of Macmillan's kids are ill, and he's not going out to theatres, but he's given his first and second chauffeurs a holiday, and the only man in the garage is the third chauffeur, who sleeps up above. Our only chance is to-night. He usually takes his wife to the pictures on Thursdays, and if he goes to-night we've got a chance. We'll have to take the Daimler because the other two are under repair. Old Macmillan brought the family back from Scotland in the Daimler, and it's just had new tires put on, and new tires are worth money."

"Do your best," said Elegant Edward encouragingly.

"I'm not going to do it alone," said Lummy. "I'll be in chauffeur's uniform, ready to nip in and get the car, but I shall have to have somebody dressed like a gentleman to travel inside, so that if the policeman on point duty recognizes the machine he won't think of stopping me, as he would if it was empty."

To which proposition Elegant Edward immediately agreed.

That night a gentleman classily attired in evening dress might have been seen lounging at the corner of Grosvenor Square, a large cigar in the corner of his mouth, his tall silk hat placed at a rakish angle over his brow. Ten minutes, a quarter of an hour passed, half an hour, and Elegant Edward began to grow apprehensive. For Lummy, in his chauffeur uniform, had gone into the mews and had not reappeared. Just as panic was seizing upon him, a noble limousine swept round the corner and drew up near him.

"Get inside," hissed Lummy, and Elegant Edward jumped in and closed the door.

. The car moved by the darkest of side ways northwards. A quarter of an hour later it had been backed into a garage near the Marylebone Road, and not until the garage door was locked and bolted did Edward switch on the interior lights.

"We've got to talk this over," said Lummy, opening the door of the car and

coming in to sit beside his partner. "This machine is going to take a lot of getting rid of. There's bound to be a squeal, and the busies will certainly get busier than ever."

"They won't come here," said Edward confidently, for this was a new garage he had taken—remote from the home of the ancient flivver.

"They mightn't come here," agreed Lummy, "and that's our only hope. If we can hang on to the car for six months, we'll find a buyer."

"Anyway," said Edward, brightening, "we've made that perishing Highlander divide."

He was not out of bed the next morning when Sergeant Lambert called.

"Good morning, Elegance," said the sergeant, walking into his room. "You don't happen to know where Lummy is to be found?"

"Lummy?" said Edward, sitting up in bed and knitting his brows. "I don't know any such person."

"I'm talking of Lummy Chalker."

"Oh, Mr. Chalker!" said Edward, as though a light had dawned on him. "No, I can't tell you. I only know the man by sight."

"You've been seen with him once or twice," said the detective.

Elegant Edward shrugged his shoulders.

"A gentleman must be civil," he said, "even to the lower orders."

The detective sat down on the bed.

"Now be a sensible man and tell me where you have put Macmillan's car?" he wheedled.

Edward stared at him blankly.

"Macmillan's car... ?" he said, shaking his head in wonder. "My dear fellow, I didn't even know that Macmillan had a car. And who's Macmillan?"

Half-an-hour of close questioning, of artful innuendo and suggestion, of pretending that he knew more than he did know, failed to assist the detective to a discovery, and it was five days later when he returned. Edward was then in bed, although the hour was one o'clock in the afternoon. His head was splitting, his eyes running painfully. He had little interest in life, and not even the appearance of the detective galvanized him to activity.

"Just taken Lummy," said Mr. Lambert, keeping at a respectful distance from the elegant one.

"Have you?" said Edward faintly.

"You're a bit of a Socialist, too, aren't you?" asked the detective.

"I don't know what I am," groaned Edward. "My Gawd! I do feel bad!"

"Believe in making old Macmillan share things, don't you?" asked the detective.

Edward moaned some unintelligible reply.

"Well, you're sharing something now old cock," said the cheerful officer of the law. "You're sharing a dose of measles that the two kids brought back from Scotland! They came down in that Daimler, and it was going to be fumigated the day after you pinched it. We couldn't find the car, so we looked for measles. I've just taken Lummy off to the isolation hospital, and there's an ambulance waiting for you at the door."

III. — A FORTUNE IN TIN

ELEGANT EDWARD dealt in a stable line of goods, and, in the true sense of the word, he was no thief. He was admittedly a chiseller, a macer, a twister, and a get-a-bit. His stock-in-trade consisted either of shares in derelict companies purchased for a song, or options on remote properties, or genuine gold claims, indubitable mineral rights and oil propositions. Because of his elegance and refinement, he was able to specialize in this high-class trade and make a living where another man would have starved.

Mr. Farthindale had emerged from a welter of trouble with almost all the capital which had been his a week before. He had tracked down certain disloyal partners who had sold property of his, and had forced them to disgorge their ill-gotten gains, and from the fence who had illegally purchased his property, he had obtained the rest.

The police were seeking a certain Scotty Ferguson, the partner in question, and because Edward had no desire to give evidence against his some-time confederate, he had changed his lodgings, and was considering the next move in his adventurous game.

It came as a result of a chance meeting with an itinerant vendor of novelties, who stood on the kerb of a London street selling 100,000 mark notes for twopence. Insensibly Edward's mind went to the business he understood best. In the city of London was a snide bucket-shop keeper with whom he was acquainted. This gentleman operated from a very small office in a very large building. A picture of the building was on his note-paper, and country clients were under the impression that the Anglo-Imperial Stock Trust occupied every floor and overflowed to the roof. To him, Edward repaired, and found him playing patience, for business was bad.

"How do, Mr. Farthindale. Come in and sit down."

"How's it going?" asked Edward conventionally.

The Anglo-Imperial Stock Trust made a painful face.

"Rotten," he said. "I sent out three thousand circulars last week, offering the finest oil ground in Texas at a hundred pounds an acre. I got one reply—from an old lady who wanted to know if I'd met her son who lives in Texas City. The suckers are dying, Mr. Farthindale."

Edward scratched his chin.

"Oil's no good to me," he said. "I've worked oil in Scotland. What about mines?"

"Gold or silver?" asked the Anglo-Imperial, rising with alacrity. "I've got a peach of a silver mine—"

"I've worked silver mines," said the patient Edward, "in Wales. Silver never goes as well as gold."

"What about tin?" asked The Trust anxiously. "The Trevenay Tin Mine Corporation? The mine's been working since the days of the Pernicions, or Phinocians... prehistoric dagoes... you know?"

Elegant Edward had a dim idea that the Phoenicians were pretty old, and was mildly impressed.

"I've got a hundred and twenty thousand shares out of a hundred and fifty thousand. It's a real mine, too—about forty years ago a thousand people used to work on it!" The Trust continued. "The other thirty thousand are owned by an old Scotsman—a professor or something—and he won't part. I offered him twenty pounds for 'em, too. Not that they're worth it, or rather at the time they weren't," added The Trust hastily, realizing that Edward stood in the light of a possible purchaser.

"But the land and machinery are worth money?" suggested Edward.

The Trust shook his head.

"The company only holds mining rights, and the royalty owner has got first claim on the buildings—such as they are. But the company looks good, and the new share certificates I had printed look better. You couldn't have a finer proposition, Mr. Farthindale."

There were hagglings and bargainings, scornful refusings and sardonic comments generally before Elegant Edward was able to take the trail again, the owner of a hundred and twenty thousand shares in a tin company, which was genuine in all respects, except that it contained no tin.

"If you're going to Scotland, see that professor," said The Trust at parting. "You ought to get the rest of the stock for a tenner."

It was to Scotland, as a needle to a magnet, that Elegant Edward was attracted. A desire to get "his own back," to recoup himself for his losses, in fact to "show 'em" brought him to a country he loathed.

He had come to sell to the simple people of Scotia, at ten shillings per share, stock which he had bought at a little less than a farthing. And, since cupidity and stupidity run side by side in the mental equipment of humanity, he succeeded.

It was in the quietude of an Edinburgh lodging that Edward ran to earth Professor Folloman.

The professor was usually very drunk and invariably very learned—a wisp of a man, with long, dirty-white hair and an expression of woe. Five minutes after the two boarders met in the dismal lodging-house "drawing-room," the professor, a man without reticence, was retailing his troubles.

"The world," said Professor Folloman, "neglects its geniuses. It allows men of my talent to starve, whilst it gives fortunes to the charlatan, the faker and the crook. O mores, o tempores!"

"Oui, oui," said Elegant Edward misguidedly.

The professor came naturally to his favourite subject, which was the hollowness and chicanery of patent medicines. It was his illusion that his life had been ruined, his career annihilated, and the future darkened by the popularity of certain patent drugs which are household words to the average Briton. That his misfortune might be traced to an early-acquired habit of making his breakfast on neat whisky—a practice which on one occasion had

almost a tragical result—never occurred to him.

"Here am I, sir, one of the best physicians of the city of Edinburgh, a man holding degrees which I can only describe as unique, and moreover, the possessor of shares in one of the richest tin mines in Cornwall, obliged to borrow the price of a drink from a comparative stranger."

Elegant Edward, recognizing this description of himself, made an heroic attempt to nail down the conversation to the question of tin mines, but the professor was a skillful man.

"What has ruined me?" he demanded, fixing his bright eyes on Edward with a hypnotic glare. "I'll tell you, my man! Biggins' Pills have ruined me, and Walkers' Wee Wafers and Lambo's Lightning Lung Tonic! Because of this pernicious invasion of the healing realm, I, John Walker Folloman, am compelled to live on the charity of relations—let us have a drink."

Such a direct invitation, Elegant Edward could not refuse. They adjourned to a near-by bar, and here the professor took up the threads of the conversation.

"You, like myself, are a gentleman. The moment I saw you, my man, I said: 'Here is a professional.' None but a professional would have his trousers creased, and wear a tail-coat. None but a professional would pay the scrupulous attention to his attire and the glossiness of his hat—don't drown it, my lass! whisky deserves a better fate—you're a doctor, sir?"

Edward coughed. He had never before been mistaken for a doctor. It was not an unpleasing experience.

"Not exactly," he said.

"Ah! A lawyer!"

"I've had a lot to do with the law," said Elegant Edward truthfully, "but I'm not exactly a lawyer."

"Something that makes money, I have no doubt," said the old man gloomily. "I could have been a millionaire, had I descended to the manufacture of noxious quack medicines instead of following my profession. I should have been a millionaire had somebody with my unique knowledge of metallurgy been in control of the Trevenay Mines—"

"Tin mines?" asked Elegant Edward. "There's no money in tin. I always tell my friends—I'm in the stock-broking business—'If you've got tin shares, sell 'em.'"

"I'll no' sell mine," said the old man grimly. "No, sir! I'll hold my shares. A dear friend of mine, Professor Macginnis, is in Cornwall and has promised to give me a report—Macginnis is the greatest authority on tin in this world, sir. I have his letter," he fumbled in his pocket unsuccessfully, "no, I have left it in my other jacket. But it doesn't matter. He is taking a holiday in the south, and has promised to thoroughly examine the ground."

"His—his report won't be published in the papers, will it?" asked Edward anxiously.

"It will not," said the professor, and pushed his glass across the counter. "Repeat the potion, Maggie, and let your hand be as generous as your heart, my lass!"

A few days later, and on a raw December morning, with leaden clouds overhead and the air thick with driving sleet, Elegant Edward came out of the station and gazed disconsolately upon so much of the town as was visible through the veil of the blizzard.

"So this is Dundee!" said Elegant Edward, unconsciously paraphrasing a better-known slogan. He had chosen Dundee for the scene of his operations, mainly because it was not Glasgow. Gathering up his rug and his bag, he beckoned the one cab in sight and gave his instructions.

At the little hotel where he was set down, he found a letter awaiting him. It was addressed to Angus Mackenzie (he had signed the register in that name) and its contents were satisfactory. The small furnished office which he had engaged by letter was waiting his pleasure, the key was enclosed, together with a receipt for the rent he had paid in advance.

To trace the progress of Mr. Farthindale through the months that followed his arrival on the Tay would be more or less profitless; to tell the story of his limited advertising campaign, his clever circularization and the pleasing volume of business which came his way, and divers other incidentals, would be to elongate the narrative to unpardonable length.

Margaret Elton came to him on the third day after his arrival. She was tall, good-looking and, moreover, she believed in miracles. But although she was, by the admission of one who loved her best, masterful, she could not master the cruel fate which had hitherto denied her sufficient money to support an ailing mother without having recourse to the limited income of a young man who found every day a new reason for marrying at once.

"It is no use, John," she said firmly. "I'm not going to let you marry the family. When I can make mother independent I'll marry."

"Margaret," he said, "that means waiting another fifty years—but I'll wait. What is your new boss like?"

"He's English and inoffensive," she said tersely.

Which in a sense was true, though Elegant Edward had his own doubts about his inoffensiveness.

Edward would have fired her the day she came, only he couldn't summon sufficient courage. Thereafter, he was lost. She took control of the office, the business, and Elegant Edward. It was she who had the idea for appointing the travellers to carry the joyous news about the Trevenay Tin Mine to the remotest parts of Scotland; she who discharged them when their expense accounts came in; she who saw the printers and corrected the proofs of the circular describing the history of the Trevenay Mine; she who bought the typewriter, and insisted upon Edward coming to the office at ten o'clock every morning. She liked Edward; she told him so. Usually such a declaration, coming from so charming a female, would have set Edward's head wagging. But she had so many qualifications to her admiration that he was almost terrified at her praise.

"I don't like that moustache. Why do you wax it, Mr. Mackenzie?" she demanded. "It looks so ridiculous! I wonder how you would look clean-shaven?"

Now Edward's moustache was the pride of his life, and he made one great effort to preserve it intact.

"My personal appearance—" he began with tremulous hauteur.

"Take it off; I'd like to see you without it," she said, "unless you've got a bad mouth. Most men wear moustaches because their mouths won't stand inspection."

The next morning Edward came clean-shaven, and she looked at him dubiously.

"I think you had better grow it again," she said. It was her only comment.

Money was coming in in handsome quantities—Mr. Farthindale's new profession was paying handsome dividends.

One day there floated into his office an acquaintance of other days, Lew Bennyfold—an adventurer at large. Happily the dominant Margaret was out at lunch.

"Thought it was you," said Lew, seating himself uninvited. "I spotted you coming into the building yesterday; it took me all the morning to locate you. What's the graft?"

Edward gazed upon the apparition in dismay. He had some slight acquaintance with this confidence man—he did not wish to improve upon it.

"This is no graft, Mr. Bennyfold," he said gently, "but honest toil and labour—I'm running a mine."

"Go on?" said the other incredulously. "You're not the What-is-it Tin Mine, are you?"

Edward nodded.

"That explains everything," said Mr. Lew Bennyfold gravely, and rose to his feet. "Well, I won't stay—I don't want to be in this."

"What do you mean?" asked Edward.

Mr. Bennyfold smiled pityingly.

"From what I've heard of you, you're a fly mug," he said; "in fact, you've got a name for being clever but easy. But how any grafter could sit here in an office, working with a 'nose' and not be wise to it, beats me."

"A nose!" said the startled Edward.

Mr. Bennyfold nodded again.

"I've been working Dundee, and 'work's' a good word. It has been perishing hard work. And I've been here long enough to see things. How do you think I came to be watching this office?"

Edward had wondered that too.

"I've been tailing up Sergeant Walker and his girl," said Lew. "I happen to lodge opposite the sergeant—he's the smartest 'busy' in Dundee. And I've noticed that he's always with a girl. Meets her after dark and they go long walks. So I got on the track of the girl. And she led me here."

"Here?" gasped Edward turning pale. "You don't mean to tell me—?"

"She's Miss Margaret Elton," said Bennyfold, "and if you've let her know anything about your business, you're as good as jugged."

Elegant Edward wiped his warm forehead.

His business was an honest one—only an insider who knew the office secrets could prove otherwise. Usually, Elegant Edward did not allow an insider to know much, but this bossy girl had taken the office workings into her own hands.

"He's sweet on her—there's no doubt about that," said Bennyfold. "My landlady told me they're going to be married. But that's worse for you, because she'll do anything for him and swear anything. Mr. Farthindale, I wouldn't be in your shoes for a million!"

He left with this, and his anxiety to avoid complications added to Edward's distress.

When the girl came back from lunch he regarded her with a new and a fearful interest. There was something very remorseless about her mouth; her eyes, he thought, were pitiless, her profile made him shudder.

"Our agent in Ayr isn't doing much business," she said brusquely. "I think we had better fire him and get another man."

He opened his mouth to speak, but no words came. Now he understood her bossiness. She had behind her the power and authority of the law.

Late in the afternoon she interrupted his gloomy meditations.

"Will you excuse me for a few minutes? A friend of mine wants to see me."

"Certainly, Miss Elton," he said, almost humbly.

When she had left the room, he went to the window and looked out.

A tall, stern-looking young man was pacing the sidewalk on the opposite side, from time to time looking up at the office window. With him was an older man—a typical chief constable in mufti.

Edward saw the girl join them, watched the earnest conversation between them, and once saw the girl look up to the window where he was standing. She saw him and said something and all three looked up.

Edward drew back quickly out of sight.

So Lew was right. He was trapped!

Now Edward was a quick thinker and a man to whom inspiration came very readily. He was inspired now. The scheme came to him in a flash—the greatest wangle that had ever entered his mind. He waited until the girl came back.

"I'm sorry I was so long. That young gentleman you saw me with—I noticed you were looking—is my fiancé, and the other gentleman is a house agent. Willie is buying a house, though I doubt if he'll ever put it to the use he intends."

"Indeed," said Edward politely. "I'll be going to my lawyers for a few minutes to get my will made. Will you witness it for me?"

She looked at him in surprise.

"Thinking of dying?" she asked suspiciously.

Edward had the feeling that to die without her permission would be regarded by her as an unfriendly act.

The little lawyer who had fixed up his tenancy was in.

"I want a short deed drawn up, transferring my business to a young lady," said Edward. "I want it done right away so that I can get it signed."

The lawyer was puzzled.

"A deed? I don't think it is necessary. A receipt would be sufficient. I'll draw it up for you. How much is being paid?"

"Half-a-crown," said Edward. He didn't think Margaret would part with more without explanation. "But it has got to have her signature."

"I see—a nominal transfer," said the lawyer, and drew up the document on the spot.

Edward carried the paper back to his office.

"You sign this here," he said, as he wrote his name across the stamp, "and to make this document legal you've got to put your name under mine and give me half-a-crown."

"Why? I've got no half-crowns to throw away!"

Eventually and on the promise that the money would be returned, she consented, signed the paper, paid and was repaid the money.

Edward put the document into an envelope, sealed it and placed it in his little safe.

"Now everything's all right," he said and smiled seraphically.

The next morning came fifty inquiries for Trevenay Shares. The afternoon

post brought forty more. He went to his bank and drew six hundred pounds. He must be ready to move at a moment's notice.

Edward had often lived on the edges of volcanos and thrived in the atmosphere of sulphur, but he was more than usually nervous that day and the next; and on the evening of the second day the blow fell.

He was leaving his office when he saw the tall stern young man come quickly towards him. Elegant Edward stood stock still.

"I want you, Mr. Mackenzie," said the officer.

"I don't know what you want me for," said Edward loudly, and at that moment Margaret Elton came out into the street.

"You may want this young lady, but you certainly don't want me."

The officer stared at him.

"I don't understand you," he said.

"You don't? Well, I'll tell you something—the business belongs to her. If you'll step inside I'll show you."

Edward led the way back to his sanctum, opened the safe, took out and opened the envelope.

"Here you are," he said, "read this."

Sergeant Walker read in silent amazement the document that transferred to Margaret Elton, "the business known as the Trevenay Share Syndicate, together with all shares held by that company, exclusive of monies standing to the credit of the syndicate, furniture, leaseholds and all properties whatsoever."

"You mean... this is Miss Elton's business?" gasped Walker.

Edward nodded gravely

"I gave it to her as—as a wedding present," he said, "there's the key of the safe —bless you, my children!"

He was out of the office before they could stop him.

"What does it mean?" asked the amazed girl.

Sergeant Walker shook his head.

"I don't know—it must be that miracle you're always talking about," he said. "I

stopped him in the street to ask him if he could give you a fortnight's holiday and come to the wedding and he sprung this on me. How did he know we were getting married?"

The first person Edward saw on Edinburgh railway station was the professor, and he was sober. The recognition was mutual and the professor waved a cheery greeting.

"Going south, eh? So am I. Yes, sir, thanks to the activities of the quacks, I haven't seen London for thirty years."

The old man got into the carriage and deposited his bag on the hat rack, and as the train began to move slowly out of the station on its non-stop run to Newcastle, he explained the object of his journey.

"I'm going to meet my dear friend, Macginnis, who has made me a rich man. The Trevenay Mine, sir, is a gold mine! I am speaking figuratively, of course. A new tin deposit has been discovered, the shares which were not worth the paper they are written on, are now worth a pound—perhaps two pounds. You said you had some? I congratulate you....

Edward did not hear any more. He had swooned.

IV. — PAPINICO FOR THE SCOT

MR. EDWARD FARTHINDALE (we may take his latest name as his best) descended from a taxi in the courtyard at King's Cross Station, and, for a man of his magnificent raiment, it appeared strange, indeed remarkable, that he should carry his own luggage, and that a battered brown Gladstone bag.

"Here, what's this?" asked the cabman ferociously.

Edward screwed a nearly-gold-rimmed monocle into his eye and surveyed the coin that was exposed in the centre of a large and grimy palm.

"That is a shilling, old thing. In the argot of your class and breeding you would describe it as a 'bob.' It is not only a shilling, my lamb, but it is also your legal fare. Hush! Not before the porters!"

He raised his gloved hand in solemn reproach to check the electric torrent of protest, and walked into the booking-hall. He was a man of middle height, slightly thin. His features, unevenly disposed, had a somewhat worn

appearance. Beneath a small and shapeless nose he wore a jet-black moustache, waxed at both ends to needle points. His clothes were of the latest model, the morning coat fitting perfectly, the striped trousers as perfectly creased. On his head, as proof of his exclusiveness and respectability, was a shiny silk hat.

"Elegant Edward, or I'm a Dutchman," said the amazed Inspector Bright, travelling detective of the Great Northern Railway.

Edward saw the burly form out of the tail of his eye and became instantly absorbed in the display of a book-stall.

"Good morning, Elegance!" said a voice in his ear, and he turned with an affected start.

"My Gad, dear old Bright!" he said; but his astonishment did not deceive the man of law.

"You rumbled me," he accused. "I saw you giving me the 'once.'"

"I saw you, but I didn't see you," said Edward. "You were, as it were, part of the landscape. You were, as it were—"

"As you were!" said the detective good-humouredly. "And where are you going, Elegance?"

"I thought," said Elegant Edward carefully, "of running up to York for a few days. I've got a brother there—he's ill, Bright. Funny thing about our family is that we're devoted, so to speak, to one another—"

"Let's have a screw at your brief," said the officer inelegantly.

Reluctantly, Mr. Farthindale produced his railway ticket.

"Glasgow!" grunted the officer.

"When I said 'York' I meant 'Glasgow,'" said Edward hastily. "Queer how I always mix those places."

Bright handed back the ticket with a thoughtful frown.

"New hunting ground for you, isn't it, Edward?"

Edward looked pained.

"I don't follow you, Mr. Bright. I'm merely running up to see my sister—"

"You said 'brother' just now."

"My sister is looking after my brother —what a nurse that girl is," said Edward ecstatically. "She ought to get the Red Cross—she ought. really. Never leaves my brother day or night—"

"Cut out your relations," interrupted the other, "and take a word of advice. You haven't been too successful with your swindles in England—if I remember rightly, you've got five convictions behind you—but if you try 'em on the Scotch, they'll skin you. You haven't a chance, Edward."

Elegant Edward listened, an indulgent smile lifting the corners of his thin lips.

"There are people up there"—the earnest inspector pointed in the direction of Camden Town, but indicated the free citizens of Glasgow—"there are people up there who know the Scotch and talk their language, and even they can't get a living. There are only three solvent crooks in Scotland—two of 'em's in Perth gaol and the other's a lady, Aberdeen Annie. And she's only solvent because she works the south nine months in the year and waits for the shooting season to take the English mugs north."

" The lady I know, or, to speak the truth, Bright,I've heard about," said Elegant Edward wearily; "but what you've got to get into your nut is that I'm going up on pleasure."

Inspector Bright signified by a gesture that he left his hearer to his fate.

"Have your own way, Edward. I've nothing against you, because you're not in my orbit, so to speak. You belong to the real police. But I'll look for you coming back and have a blanket ready to put round you—you'll want it."

Elegant Edward had no fear. In the inside pocket of his morning coat were four bank-notes, each for a hundred pounds. Within the recesses of his Gladstone was the prospectus of the Papinico Oil Well Syndicate, with photographs showing long vistas of gushers. That the Papinico oil-fields had existence there is no doubt. They were floated immediately after the war by an enterprising American promoter, who raised enough money to sink bores, and on this to raise a beautiful home at Palm Beach, and motor cars of great power. He failed, however, to raise oil in marketable quantities; and the five-dollar shares were, at the moment, about as valuable as the Russian rouble and only a little more than the German mark.

Elegant Edward bought a hundred thousand for a pound, and the man who sold them to him felt that he had made a good bargain.

There was not, in all the land, a more ingenious man than Edward. He admitted this with great frequency. More reliable was the tribute paid by

divers magistrates, who had told him on various occasions that if he only employed his undoubted talents to honest ends he would be a rich man.

Settling himself in the corner of an empty first-class carriage, he contemplated his coming task with the satisfaction of knowing that he was engaged in perfectly honest commerce; for Papinico oil was a reality, and you cannot be pinched for selling realities.

The train was on the point of starting when the door was jerked open violently, and a lady half-fell, half-sprang into the carriage.

"I am awfully sorry," she said apologetically.

Her voice was low and sweet, and Edward, who was something of a ladies man, took stock of his fellow passenger and approved. She was young, and her prettiness was of that spirituelle type which found most favour with this connoisseur of loveliness.

"Permit me," he said gallantly, and helped her to put her little case on the rack.

He did not fail to notice the golden coronet stamped on the purple leather, surmounting an intricate monogram which he could not decipher.

She was dressed exquisitely and yet severely, and the shy eyes that met his were of such a lovely blue that the sight of them almost took his breath away.

"Please don't stop smoking," she said, as Edward, after an elaborate preparation, lowered the window and prepared to throw away his cigarette. And then: "I suppose I am in the right train?"

" This is the Scottish express, madam," said Edward politely.

She heaved a sigh and smiled at the same time.

"Thank goodness!" she said. "I have a horrible weakness for catching the wrong train."

He saw at a glance she was an aristocrat; none but a highly bred young woman with perfect confidence in herself would have spoken to him. The twopenny-halfpenny people (so he told himself) would have raised their noses and sat frigidly in the corner. She, on the contrary, chatted gaily as she opened her little travelling case and took out a book.

"I don't mind travelling with men if they don't mind travelling with me," she said. "The last time I came down from the north I travelled with a woman." She made a little grimace.

"She wasn't very pleasant, miss?" suggested Elegant Edward with his most winning smile.

"She wasn't," said the girl emphatically. "She was a wretched thief—a girl well-known in Scotland—"

"Not Aberdeen Annie?" Edward was indiscreet enough to ask. "Not that I know anything about her," he went on hurriedly, "except what one reads in one's paper."

"It was Aberdeen Annie," said the girl emphatically, "and the pleasure of travelling with her cost me a two-hundred pound brooch—the wretched creature."

"It's curious," mused Edward, "how the criminal classes crop up here and there. You never know when you're safe, upon my word you don't. It's a curious coincidence that I was talking to a friend of mine at the station"—he coughed—"a high official of the police force, and we were discussing that young woman. What is she like?"

The girl shook her head.

"I don't know, except that she has red hair and very bold eyes. The police tried to get me to give a description of her, but I really didn't notice her; I was asleep most of the time. But there's no doubt that it was Aberdeen Annie."

"Curious," murmured Edward, "very curious."

A little later, by cleverly leading up to the subject, he discovered that she was Lady Evelyn Landip, the daughter of the Earl of Cheal.

"You're a soldier, aren't you?" she asked.

Edward blushed.

"I have been in the service," he said, "but not in the military service. In fact, it was secret service, if you understand me."

She opened her eyes wide.

"Really! Were you a secret service officer?"

"I was, until I went into the oil business," said Elegant Edward, who never lost an opportunity. "And when I think of how I might have been going on, earning a paltry few hundred a year, instead of making what I might term a fortune, as I have done, out of Papinico oil, I can tell you, miss, I'm not half relieved."

"Not half?" she repeated in a puzzled voice. "What does that mean? You mean you are relieved?"

"I do," said the abashed Edward. "That's exactly what I do mean."

He talked Papinico to her until the train reached York. She was good to practise on, and he had a not unnatural ambition to appear important in her eyes.

"Are the shares very valuable?" she asked, after a long and eloquent dissertation on the fortune that had been made (he did not tell her it was made by the promoter) out of Papinico.

"They are and they're hot," said Edward carefully. "Owing to trade depression and competition they are down to ten shillings, but they will see ten pounds."

"Really!" She was impressed, and pursed her pretty lips thoughtfully as she stared out of the window. "My father is interested in stocks and shares," she said. "I wonder whether you would like to meet him?"

Elegant Edward didn't even wonder. A man with a knowledge of stocks and shares would know enough about Papinico oil to have him arrested. The people he most earnestly desired to meet were those who knew nothing about the shares and their value.

"Poor daddy!" she went on with a faint smile. "He is such a stupid old dear about speculations. I don't think there has been a wild-cat scheme financed but daddy has had a big share in it."

Instantly, Elegant Edward began to look upon his travelling companion from a new angle. Only for a second did the spell of her beauty hold him to the path of rectitude, and then all there was of Adam in him stepped forth jauntily.

"If there's one person more than another I'd like to meet, miss," he said, "it's your noble parent."

She laughed.

"Then you'll have an opportunity," she said.

Then suddenly her manner changed.

She shivered slightly as she withdrew into her corner seat.

"Mr. Farthindale," she said (he had given her his card), "I wonder how you would feel if you were travelling north on as disagreeable an errand as mine—a visit which may end in the loss of my liberty."

Elegant Edward felt a cold shiver passing down his spine, but she undeceived him.

"I am going to Scotland to be married to a man I loathe—though I belong to a great house I am entirely without friends."

And then, as Edward was about to speak, she stopped him with a weary gesture.

"Forget what I have told you, Mr. Farthindale," she said sadly, and a few minutes later the train slowed for the terminus.

It was dark when the train drew in to Glasgow, and in the confusion of the arrival he missed her, and cursed himself heartily for his folly. Fortunately, he had given her the address of the by no means modest hotel where he intended putting up preparatory to his raid upon the pockets of credulous Scotland.

He did not ask why she had confided in him. Women took to him. He frequently said so. There was something about him that was very fascinating to the weaker sex. He confessed this so often that it cannot be said that he was immodest.

With an effort he put her out of his mind, resolved upon one good deed—that, if he met the red-haired girl who had robbed her, she should disgorge her ill-gotten gains. With this noble intention he busied himself from the moment of his arrival with the preparation of his campaign. In addition to a large quantity of prettily printed share certificates he had brought some two hundred and fifty addressed envelopes, supplied to him by a gentleman who specialized in cataloguing mug speculators. By eleven o'clock in the morning he had despatched these, each containing a copy of the prospectus and the announcement that our Mr. Edward Farthindale (London and Continental Agent for the Papinico Oil Fields) was at the most superior hotel in Glasgow, and would be ready and willing to supply information to intending investors.

It was in many ways an alluring letter, frank to an amazing degree. It pointed out that the value of the Papinico shares was to some extent problematical; but it was careful to relate a list of the eventually profitable oil companies that had been floated in the Papinico neighbourhood. It told the story of a young clerk who, with twenty dollars, had by judicious investment in an oil field (not the Papinico, though this fact was not emphasized) amassed a fortune of two million dollars; and it ended flourishingly, that he was "yours for service, Edward P. Farthindale."

His ground bait strewn, Edward went in search of congenial company, and found it in the shape of one Higgins, who supported Detective Inspector

Bright's theory, that professional dishonesty did not flourish in Scotland, by instantly demanding the loan of a pound.

"I'm going back to London, Edward," said Higgins. "There's no confidence in this cursed country—why, you couldn't get a box of matches without a banker's reference."

Mr. Higgins was a long-firm dealer who, on the strength of expensive note-paper and an accommodation address, secured articles of marketable value.

"You'll get nothing up here," he said disgustedly, shaking his head. "There's more pickings in gaol than there is in Glasgow, though I'm willing to admit that your graft is a bit cleverer than mine. What are you selling—Russian crown jewels?"

Elegant Edward shook his head.

"No, sir," he said; "I'm running a straight business. I'm a broker."

The lip of his companion curled.

"You'll be more broke than that," he said ominously.

And then it occurred to Edward to ask his friend a question.

"Aberdeen Annie? No, I can't say that I've met her. She doesn't work this side of Scotland. Why?"

"I merely ask because she 'did it' on a friend of mine."

"She'd do it on anybody," growled Higgins.

Edward never abandoned hope of meeting his aristocratic acquaintance, but that hope was doomed to disappointment. He saw in a Glasgow paper that Lady Evelyn Landip was a member of a ducal house party, and speculated as to which of the lords and honourables in the same paragraph was her hateful fiancé. But he had little time to brood upon the exploitation of that gracious lady, for, by a miracle, the attractive nature of the Papinico investment appealed to some eighty per cent. of the people whom he had addressed, and letters began to flow in, and in a week from his arrival the first cheque had been received and through the instrumentality of Higgins, cashed. Not a day passed but a thousand ornamental share certificates were transferred to optimistic clients.

Papinico was booming, and Elegant Edward's £400 had grown to a thousand. And then, one morning, there walked into his room a broad-shouldered representative of the Glasgow detective force.

"'Morning, Mr. Farthindale or Ha'pennydale, or whatever your name is."

Elegant Edward was neither haughty nor misunderstanding. He knew the visitor for what he was, and knew that there is a time to be fresh and a time to be respectful.

"You're selling shares in a dud oil-field," said the officer; "and whilst, in the strict terms of the law, you're not swindling (otherwise I shouldn't be arguing the point with you) in another sense you are."

"If anybody says that there's no such company as the Papinico—" began Edward.

"Nobody does," interrupted the detective. "If there wasn't a Papinico oil- field I should pinch you. As it is"—he looked at his watch—"there's a train out of Glasgow to-night; you'd better take it, and if you follow my advice you'll go sharp."

Elegant Edward nodded gravely. "A word to the wise," said he, "is more than sufficient; it's enough."

The detective gone, Edward rushed his uncashed cheques to the obliging Mr. Higgins, and at four o'clock that afternoon, with his Gladstone packed, his bill paid, and a pleasing bulkiness of inside pocket, he strolled to the railway station.

And the first person he saw was Lady Evelyn Landip! She was more beautifully attired than ever, wearing a beautiful sable coat, but he recognized her instantly. To his amazement and gratification, she hurried across to greet him with a warmth which was most unexpected.

"I'm so glad, Mr. Farthindale!" she gasped. "I did want to see you, but I forgot your address. Can I speak to you?"

"My dear young lady," said Elegant Edward with a beatific smile, "you can speak to me anywhere you like."

"Come to my car," she said. "We will drive somewhere."

He hesitated.

"I'm going to London," he said.

"So was I, but I'm not now. Give me an hour," she pleaded.

It was not in Elegant Edward to have refused her. He deposited his bag in the cloakroom and followed her out into the station yard. A large and imposing

limousine was waiting, and he followed her in. Leaning out of the window, she gave the driver instructions, and until they were clear of Glasgow and were passing through the green lanes of the country she did not speak. Then:

"I was married to-day," she said.

"Married to-day?" gasped Edward.

She nodded.

"Then—why—?"

"I have left my husband," she said. "Mr. Farthindale, I could not, could not stay with him!"

She was weeping softly into her handkerchief, and it would not have been like Elegant Edward to have denied her sympathy.

"Not before the chauffeur," she said in a low tone. "Remember you are a gentleman."

It was an effort, but Edward remembered.

They reached the edge of a little wood, and, tapping at the window, she stopped the car and alighted, Edward following her.

"There is something you ought to know," she said, and her little hand trembled for a moment in the crook of his arm. "It was always impossible, but a thousand times more impossible—after I met you."

Edward's heart stood still for a second; for a longer space of time his feet followed suit: he could only stare at her.

"My dear Miss—Lady—" he stammered.

"I love you," she murmured, and fell into his arms.

She had fainted! And then from behind a gruff voice hailed him.

"Hi, sir! What the devil do you mean, sir!"

He turned and saw a young man of great height and apparent muscularity, advancing on him with rapid strides.

"So I've caught you, have I? And you, Evelyn!"

The great brute shook the unconscious girl, and it required all Elegant Edward's self-possession to refrain from leaping at his throat. He was a much

bigger man than Edward.

"Let me explain—" began Edward, clearing his voice.

"No explanation is necessary," said the young man furiously. "I find my bride in your arms! You shall answer for this, sir."

He almost snatched the fainting girl from Edward's half-hearted grip and, lifting her as though she were a child, carried her back to the car. In a few minutes the motor had disappeared in a cloud of dust.

He put his hand mechanically to the place where her head had rested and felt a strange vacuum. The inside pocket should have bulged with crisp notes. There was no bulge. He thrust his hand into his inside pocket. There was no excuse for a bulge—the money was gone!

* * * * *

"No, sir, I don't want a blanket," said Elegant Edward dismally to Inspector Bright. "I've got all the clothes I want. The only thing I want is to borrow five shillings to get me some breakfast."

"Did they sting you that much?" asked the sympathetic detective.

"Don't say 'they,' say 'she.' And, mind you, she was a lady born, I'll swear it."

"Hold hard," said the inspector, a light dawning upon him. "It wasn't the girl who jumped into your carriage—it wasn't she who fainted in your arms?"

Edward nodded.

"And when she had gone, you found all your money had gone?"

Edward nodded again and checked a sob.

Inspector Bright whistled.

"It's my fault, my poor chap," he said. "I should have introduced you, but I thought you'd know Aberdeen Annie."

Edward did not swoon.

V. — THE AMATEUR DETECTIVE

A DESIRE for vengeance is a most disturbing quantity, and puts a man off his work more effectively than love, poverty, or natural laziness.

Elegant Edward was not ordinarily temperamental. He brought to life just that amount of philosophy that enabled him to overcome difficulties which in other men might seem insurmountable. He had, too, so excellent an opinion of his own native qualities that he could favourably interpret every set-back that came his way, and see, in his failures, something that would have been a success if that mysterious factor "luck" had been a little more on his side.

But now he had been thrown entirely off his balance—and by a woman. Mr. Farthindale sometimes wondered whether he wasn't dreaming. It was incredible that a man of his character and reputation, a fellow whom girls ran after, who was admired by some of the classiest people in London, should have been "bested" by a chit of a girl—and a Scottish girl at that.

"What upsets me, Hoggins," he said to his friend and confidant, the young barman at the "Stag's Head," his favourite hostel, "is to think that I've allowed my kindness of heart and naturally easygoing disposition to get the better of me. My downfall, so to speak, is my high respect for the female sex—I've always been a lady's man—that's my weakness. But, Hoggins, I'm a lady's man no more. This Aberdeen Annie has had her last chance. She's twisted me and double-crossed me and done the dirty on me. Flesh and blood won't stand any more. She's roused my English spirit.

Just as we beat the Scotch at Bannockburn—"

"My recollection," said Mr. Hoggins, swabbing the counter mechanically, "is that it was the other way about."

"Be that as it may," said Elegant Edward, who was superior to the lessons of history, "I'm going to Do Her One in The Eye!"

A terrific threat.

"What are you going to do?" asked the interested Hoggins.

Not once, but many times, had Elegant Edward poured into his ear the story of Annie's many duplicities.

"I'm going to shop her," said Edward with a sinister smile.

Now it is a fact that no breaker of laws "shops," or, in other words, betrays a fellow larcenist except in extraordinary circumstances.

"I hate doing it, but I'm going to show this young woman that she can't play

with me. She's in town—arrived this morning. My agents or spies, or what-nots, have traced her. She's staying at the Grand Imperial in Bedford Square under the name of Miss Macguire."

Mr. Hoggins looked at his client in awe.

"You must have a big organization, Mr. Farthindale," he said. He was secretly proud of being in the confidence of so distinguished a representative of the underworld.

"Stupendous," replied Elegant Edward. "I'll have another double Scotch, Percy."

The truth was that Edward had by chance seen the girl that day passing along Oxford Street in a taxi, had followed her in another, and walking into the hotel after her had glanced casually at the visitors' book.

"Miss Mary Macguire—Perth." He had read the latest entry and his nimble mind had started working.

She owed him money; she had robbed him shamelessly. His heart was over-charged with bitter resentment. He must be cunning, artful, subtle. Diamond must cut diamond so effectively that all that was left of the diamond from Aberdeen was a heap of glittering dust to be ground under his rubber heel.

The next morning he took up a position which gave him an uninterrupted view of the Grand Imperial and its main entrance. So waiting, there strolled into his ken one whom at first he was sorry to see. There are many "busies" in London, but no busy quite as busy as Detective-Inspector Carlam of the Flying Squad, a tall, farmer-like man. There were very few busies that Edward did not know. Unhappily there were fewer busies who did not know Edward.

"Why, if it isn't my old friend Elegant!" said Carlam, stopping and taking his pipe from his mouth, the better to express his surprise. "And what are you doing on this fine morning? Holding up the railings of Bedford Square?"

Mr. Farthindale smiled, brushed the sleeve of his faultless morning coat and announced that he was waiting for a friend.

"And scared to death that he'll see you!" smiled Mr. Carlam.

Then it was that the great inspiration was born in Edward's mind.

"Mr. Carlam," he said, "would you like a big cop?"

The detective viewed him with a speculative eye.

"It depends on what you call big—who's the victim to be, and why are you shopping him?"

"He's done me a bad turn," said Edward. It was easy to call Annie "he"—she was certainly no lady.

"Well, what is the job?"

"I don't know," said Edward frankly. "I know the party is here for illegal purposes—to wit, pinching. She doesn't travel for nothing."

"Oh, it's a she, is it?" nodded the inspector. "What's the matter—disappointed in love?"

"Me? Ha! ha!" Edward laughed hollowly. "No, Mr. Carlam, I'm not that sort of person. Love's a myth, as the saying goes. The job ain't ready for you yet—I should have said isn't—but when it is, you'll hear from me. Do you mind giving me your address, Mr. Carlam?"

"Same old," said Carlam tersely. "If you can't find your way to Scotland Yard, ask a policeman."

Soon after Carlam had passed on the girl came out of the hotel. Elegant Edward beckoned a cab from the rank.

"Get up close to that cab;" he pointed to the one which a dainty figure was at that moment entering. "Don't lose sight of it."

The cab turned into Holborn, ran down past Holborn Bars, turned into Hatton Garden and, half-way along that lugubrious thoroughfare, stopped. By an arrangement with the cabman, Edward passed the stationary cab and had a glimpse of the fresh, pretty face of Aberdeen Annie. There was no doubt about it—it was she. Looking through the peephole at the back of the cab, he saw her enter an office.

He stopped his own cab and got out, strolling carelessly back along the side-walk till he came opposite the entrance through which she had passed. There were a number of brass plates on the door lintel, and each one was the name of a dealer in precious stones. Into which had she gone, he wondered, and stepped boldly into the passage. Then, from the floor above, he heard a voice.

"Is Mr. Manden in?"

"Yes, miss."

Manden! He knew the name: one of the biggest diamond merchants in Hatton Garden. He went out into the street again and sat in his cab, watching. In

twenty minutes she came out, was driven off, and he made no attempt to follow. Instead, he walked into the building, mounted the stairs and came to the office door of Saul Manden, Ltd.

The office into which he walked was a room of microscopic size, made smaller by the counter which barred visitors from the clerks' office. A young man slipped down from his stool and came to attend to his needs.

"Good morning," said Elegant Edward politely.

He took a card from his pocket and laid it on the counter, and the clerk read:

Mr. Edward Farthindale,

Farthindale's Detective Agency.

It was a little business which Elegant Edward ran as a cloak for a more nefarious occupation. By the English law it is no sin to engage in the business of private detection; and a tiny office on the top floor of a house in Beak Street had served many purposes, not the least of which being the right to put on his visiting card the announcement which the clerk was now reading with such interest.

"I'm making a few inquiries about the young lady that called just now."

"Oh, you mean Miss Farthindale?" said the clerk.

"Who?" said Elegant Edward indignantly. "She didn't call herself Farthindale, did she?"

"She certainly did."

Edward swallowed something. The nerve of the woman! For a second he was incapable of coherent speech.

"Has she been buying anything?"

"No, she came to inquire about a necklace."

"What address did she give?"

"Hotel Excelsior, Woburn Place," said the clerk. "Why, isn't she staying there?"

But Elegant Edward was not giving away his priceless secrets.

"I don't mind telling you," said the clerk confidentially, "that I have my suspicions about her. She wants me to bring a two thousand pound necklace to

her hotel at three o'clock this afternoon."

"Indeed!" said, Elegant Edward politely. "Well, you can't be too careful."

He drove back to Bedford Square, and walked with a nonchalant air into the wide and busy vestibule of the Grand Imperial. Almost the first person he saw, reclining in her big chair in the lounge, was the girl! She saw him, too, and, with a smile, beckoned him. Elegant Edward was one of those resourceful men who are never at a loss. He could deal with any situation at a second's notice, and with an easy and confident air he strolled across to Annie.

"Good morning, Miss Macguire—Miss Mary Macguire," he added carefully, as he took her hand. "This is an unexpected pleasure."

"Not exactly unexpected, is it?" she said, motioning him to a chair. "You saw me in Oxford Street the other day, and you were watching the hotel this morning. And, unless I'm greatly mistaken, you followed me to Hatton Garden."

Elegant Edward was momentarily taken aback.

"Are you staying here?" he asked innocently.

She shook her head.

"No; I'm staying at another hotel. I've got a friend here—a lady I met in Scotland—who wants to buy some jewellery cheaply; and, as I probably know more about diamonds than any other person in the kingdom, I am earning an honest commission."

"Indeed!" said Edward, courteous but incredulous.

She laughed softly.

"You think I'm romancing? But the truth is, Mr. Pennyfarthing—"

"You know my name," said Edward loudly. "There's no occasion to take liberties, Annie. Considering that you're using it yourself and infringing, so to speak, my copyright, you needn't pretend you don't know my moniker."

"How vulgar!" she murmured. And then: "Yes, I am leading an honest life, and really, it's most amusing. Why don't you try it yourself?" she asked, without, offence.

"You're not staying here? Of course your name isn't Mary Macguire—oh, no."

"It doesn't matter what my name is or where I'm staying," said Annie. "I'm

buying jewellery on the straight for Lady Steen, who is staying at this hotel."

"And who knows you're Aberdeen Annie, I suppose?" asked Edward sarcastically.

"She even knows that," said the girl coolly.

Her brows met in a little frown.

"I hope you're not going to make any unpleasantness, Edward," she said softly. "I know I treated you badly, but in our profession one must live, and take the mugs as we find them."

"Nobody's ever called me a mug before," said Edward wrathfully.

"Then you've been living with flatterers," smiled the girl. "Are we friends?"

She held out her hand, Edward took it. He was not to be kidded again. Pharaoh did not harden his heart against Moses and the children of Israel more completely than Elegant Edward hardened his heart against Aberdeen Annie.

That afternoon the girl called at the office of Saul Manden and, from the interior of a taxicab, Edward saw her alight. She was in the building nearly half-an-hour. When she came out, she drove quickly away in a cab that had been waiting for her. Immediately she had disappeared, Edward raced up the stairs. The clerk who had spoken to him was behind the counter, and with him a short, bald man.

"Name of Farthindale," said Edward breathlessly. "You remember me? I was here this morning."

" Oh, yes, Mr. Farthindale. I told Mr. Manden."

"That young lady," twittered Edward excitedly, "has she bought anything?"

"Yes," said Mr. Manden, looking at the visitor suspiciously, "she bought a necklace for two thousand pounds."

"Taken it away with her?"

"No, she hasn't." He pointed to a small box, tied and sealed, that stood on the table. "It's here. We're sending it to her as soon as her cheque is cleared."

A beatific smile broke over the face of Elegant Edward. He was almost happy.

"Did she have the box in her hand after it was tied up?" he asked.

A look of apprehension came into the fish-like eyes of Mr. Manden.

"Yes, she did—she put her address on. Why?"

"I won't tell you yet. Put that box in the safe. I'm going to Scotland Yard to bring a friend."

Manden took up the package in alarm.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Do you think she's rung the changes?"

"Don't open it," warned Edward. "Wait until the officer of the law calls. Put it in the safe."

At last he had caught her—at last the Scottish siren was in his grasp! He would have no mercy; he felt no regret, as his taxicab made its swift way to Scotland Yard.

Inspector Carlam was in, but was engaged. Elegant Edward kicked his heels impatiently till a uniformed constable took him up the stone stairs and along a gloomy corridor to the room which Inspector Carlam occupied in business hours.

"What is it—a confession you want to make?" asked Carlam, leaning back in his chair and filling his pipe lazily.

"I told you I had a job for you, Mr. Carlam," said Elegant Edward, speaking with great earnestness and speed. "It's one of the biggest jobs you've had. Do you know Manden?"

"The diamond man?" asked Carlam, taking a sudden interest in the proceedings. "I don't know him, but I know of him. Why?"

"He's been diddled," said Edward. "A ringer has been worked on him for two thousand quid."

"And who's the bird?"

"Aberdeen Annie," said Edward in triumph. "We've got her this time, Mr. Carlam. Thanks to my intelligence and introspection, one of the cleverest criminals in Scotland, England, Ireland, or Wales, has put her head in the noose. She ought to have ten years," said Elegant Edward. "Maybe she'd get twenty if you spoke up to the judge."

"You don't seem to like the lady," said Carlam. "Now tell me all about it."

Elegant Edward related what had happened.

"A ringer, eh?" said Carlam thoughtfully. "She bought the jewels, came with

another box similarly tied and sealed, and changed them under Manden's nose —is that the idea?"

"Yes," nodded Edward, "and then offered a cheque in payment, and asked him to keep the box until she sent for it."

"Where is she to be found?"

"Well, she's staying at an hotel under the name of Farthindale."

Carlam looked at him suspiciously.

"Unknown to me," said Edward loudly. "It's the biggest bit of cheek I've ever heard in my life. As a matter of fact, she's not staying at the hotel at all. She's at the Grand Imperial, under the name of Mary Macguire. I found all this out myself without assistance," he added.

"Wonderful," murmured the detective.

He rang a bell, and, to the officer who appeared in answer:

"Send up Sergeant Clear and Sergeant Brown," he said. "Well, I'm much obliged to you, Edward. The result looks like being excellent, whatever your motive may be."

"Justice is my motive," said Elegant Edward with dignity. "Since I have been straight I've got a fair horror of all crime."

"I gather," said the Inspector, "that you've had these exalted emotions during the last ten minutes?"

Elegant Edward did not argue, and at that moment the two detectives came in.

"Go to the Grand Imperial, see Miss Mary Macguire, and place her under arrest. Warn the police at the northern stations to arrest and detain a woman who gives the name either of Macguire or Farthindale—Mr. Farthindale will give you her description. And now we'll see the ringer," he said, knocking out his pipe and taking down his hat from a peg. "You don't mind being seen with me? It won't lower your prestige amongst gentlemen of your profession?"

"I'm proud to be seen with you," said Elegant Edward graciously, "and I wouldn't say that of everybody."

They found Mr. Manden in a state of pitiable agitation. His clerk was away at the bank trying, if possible, to get a special clearance of the cheque, or, at any rate, to know through the bank the worst that was to be known.

The detective took up the package: it was addressed to "Lady Steen, The Towers, Auchlachen, Scotland."

Carlam nodded.

"I know Lady Steen by repute. She is a very rich woman and a philanthropist. In all probability, though, she's out of the country, and it doesn't much matter whether she is or not," he added. "The ringer has been worked, and the diamonds are in Annie's bag by now."

"Then what is in the box?" wailed Mr. Manden.

"It may be a piece of coal, it may be a cake of soap," said Carlam carefully.

"But she didn't change it—I'll swear she didn't change it! I was watching her closely. The box never left my sight."

Elegant Edward smiled, a little proudly.

"You don't know what people like these criminals can do, Mr. Manden," he said. "What the inspector tells you is right, only I should have said a bead necklace."

"Shall I open this?"

The detective looked at the diamond merchant, and he nodded dumbly.

"I've never had this worked on me before" he moaned. "Two thousand pounds' worth of diamonds! And she haggled and bargained so that I put them in at a price that didn't give me four per cent, of profit! It's ruinous, it's wicked...."

The detective took a pair of scissors, snipped the binding tape and slowly broke the seals. Slowly he unwrapped the parcel, showing a small black box inside.

"That's my box," said Manden suddenly. "I can swear to it!"

"She could have got hold of one of your boxes easily enough," said Carlam discouragingly.

He lifted the lid. There was. a small pad of cotton-wool, which he took out, then a large parcel, wrapped in tissue paper. He put it on the counter and unrolled the package. There was another layer of cotton-wool, and then there sparked in the afternoon sunlight the most beautiful diamond necklace that Elegant Edward had ever seen.

"It's there! It's there!" almost screamed Manden. "That's my necklace: I'd

know it anywhere!"

He took it up feverishly, carried it to the window and made a quick examination.

"Yes, that's the necklace."

"It's not a fake?" asked the inspector in consternation.

"Fake? Don't you think I'd know a fake?" said the other contemptuously. "Of course it isn't! It's got my mark here."

He showed an almost invisible mark scratched on one of the settings. At that moment the door opened and the clerk came in.

"Well?" asked Manden eagerly.

"The cheque's cleared; it was all right," said the young man. "We telephoned through to her bank."

Carlam looked at Edward, and in his eye there was a steely glitter which boded no good to the amateur detective.

"Well—Sherlock," he said, "what will you have—a butter-dish or a coconut?"

"I thought ... I thought..." stammered Edward.

"It's the first time in your life you ever did," snarled the officer. "Come back with me to the Yard. This business isn't settled yet."

Indeed it was not settled. They arrived at Scotland Yard to discover two grave detectives waiting to report.

"I've detained Miss Mary Macguire, sir," said one of the sergeants, "but I'm afraid there's going to be a whole lot of trouble. She's a well-known temperance lecturer from America—a woman about fifty and highly connected. They're communicating with the American Consul."

Carlam dropped into his chair with a groan.

"Where is she?" he asked.

"I took the liberty of bringing her here. She's in my room."

They escorted her in—a thin, hard-faced lady, wearing huge horn-rimmed spectacles.

"Say, are you the Chief of Police?" she asked. "Well, I'm Mary Macguire. I

guess that's a name pretty well known wherever the English language is spoken—Mary Macguire of Cincinnatti, President of the Women's Anti-Booze League. Now I want to know why I've been arrested. I guess prohibition ain't so popular in this country as it ought to be, but that's no reason why I should be persecuted, and I'm going to make you look like three cents before I've finished with you."

"My dear madam—" began Carlam.

"And don't 'dear madam' me." She shook her fist in his face. "This is going to cost the British Government a hundred thousand dollars. Yes, sir! I'm the kind of woman that once I get my teeth in anythin' I never let go! That's what's made us the greatest nation in the world...."

She continued without stopping for twenty minutes. In the end Carlam grovelled.

It was during the grovelling process that Elegant Edward stole away, his heart too sad to meet the reproaches which were surely coming when the mollified lady had been bought off.

He turned swiftly out of Scotland Yard, passed into Whitehall, and reached Trafalgar Square. And there he was waiting, a prey to indecision, when he saw the girl. She was in a car, and hailed him.

He was in no mood to meet Aberdeen Annie, yet the magnetism of her drew him.

"I've just been up to Manden to collect my necklace," she said. "He tells me you've been up to see him. Oh, Edward! Edward!"

"I don't want to talk to you," said Edward.

She got out of the car and took his arm, in full view of the populace.

"Let's talk," she said, and drew him unwillingly under the Admiralty Arch and passed down the Mall.

"There's such a thing as being too clever," said Annie. "The people who are too clever are caught."

Elegant Edward shrugged his shoulders.

"And now I'll tell you something," she said. "There are two kinds of people you can never rob: the one is a diamond merchant, and the other is a thief."

"You robbed me," he was stung into saying. "That's what you've done. You

robbed me, and you got me in bad with the police. But you'll never rob me again."

She laid both her hands on his shoulders and looked into his eyes. Interested passers-by stopped to see what was going to happen,

"Edward," she said, and her voice was tremulous, "you misjudge me cruelly. Good-bye!"

With a sob in her throat she turned and walked quickly back to the waiting cab, and Edward watched her with a sneer. She would never kid him again.

A clock struck five. He put his hand down to take out the elegant gold watch that he wore for the occasion, but it was not there, nor his chain, nor his gold cigarette-case, nor anything that was his.

He flew through the Admiralty Arch, but the taxi had disappeared.

"A common thief," said Edward bitterly.

VI. — DOUBLE BLUFF

YOU can well understand that I'm not called "Elegant Edwards" for nothing. I think I can say—without swank or conceit of any kind whatever—that there isn't a classier dresser than me. I've spent a fortune at Herbert Hawkins, the Gentleman's Outfitters in the Kingsland Road, and if there's a man who understands tony dressing it's Herbert. And, what is more, I've given him ideas. It was my idea to put velvet cuffs on an evening dress coat; my idea to introduce pale blue dress waistcoats, and black and white stripes down dress trousers.

In my game, dressing is half the battle. A good suit of clothes and a pair of new patent boots inspires confidence; though in my case I don't depend so much upon good clothes as upon my natural genius as a man of the world and my classy conversation. If there is a cleverer tale-pitcher in the world than me I'd like to meet him. I never shall, of course.

"Dob," I said once to my man Dobson, "you've met a few fellows in your time: did you ever hear one with my vocabulary or parts of speech?"

"No, Mr. Edwards," he said (and mind you, he's no fool), "I haven't; and what's more, I don't expect to."

Dobson's my valet—a good fellow when kept in his place. Naturally, he wouldn't take a liberty with me because I'm too wide. The man that could double-cross me was never born.

"Them Hugginses and Philips' are 'cans' compared to you, Mr. Edwards," he said.

"Don't say 'cans,' Dob," I said kindly—I always like to impart information and education where'er I can—"say 'mugs.'"

I live on mugs, that being the law of nature. The lion lives on a mug called sheep, and the wolf lives on a mug called chicken. The worm's a mug to the bird, and the bird's a mug to the cat, and so it goes on. I'm in the lion class myself.

I don't say that I invariably make a kill. Even lions miss sometimes. Mugs' luck saves many a lamb, and just to show you that even a man of my class can, so to speak, lose the scent, take the case of McEwing.

I had caught a fellow in London for £300—easy. Picked him up in the park and told him I'd just inherited a million, and was looking round for an honest man to distribute a hundred thousand pounds to the poor of London. Being naturally honest, he jumped at the chance of handling a hundred thousand that he didn't have to account for. And to show he was honest and trusted me, he gave me £300 to hold... and that was that.

"I think, Dob," said I, "we'd better get out of London whilst the going's good. This fellow will be returning to America next week—he told me so. Where shall we go?"

"Ireland, sir?" said Dob.

But I wouldn't have that. I wanted a law-abiding country where a fellow can make his pickings without running the risk of being shot.

"What about Scotland—or are they too sharp, sir?" says Dob; and that put me on my mettle.

"Nobody's too sharp for me, Dob," I said. (I had to be stern with the fellow because he'd touched me on a tender spot.) "The Scotch are easy, Dob. I'd sooner tell the tale to a Scotchman than to a Sunday-school teacher from Devizes."

Never having been to Scotland before, I must admit that the idea appealed to me. I knew a fellow up in Glasgow. He runs a snide bookmaking business. If you lose, you lose: if you win, he's lost your letter.

"How can I afford to pay, Edwards?" he used to say to me. "It costs me all I can spare to advertise,"

So that afternoon I wrote him a letter, telling him I was coming up, and when the letter was posted I hopped down to Herbert the Tailor.

"Herb," I said, "I'm going up to Scotland. What clothes ought I to get?"

I wanted to do the thing properly, and, having seen a picture of the Royal Family shooting in Scotland, I knew that a high hat and a morning coat would look out of place, not to say de trop.

"Are you going on the moor, Mr. Edwards?" he asked, and I was annoyed.

"I'm going to Scotland, not to quod," I said haughtily; "and anyway, they couldn't send me to Dartmoor."

Then I discovered that he meant a grouse moor—in other words, shooting—and I said yes. Personally, I'm fond of the open air life, and the grouse moors of Glasgow were about my mark.

He hadn't got the articles himself, but gave me a note to Levy in Wardour Street.

"Hire 'em, don't buy 'em," he said, and it struck me as a good idea.

Levy asked me if I was Scotch, and I said I was.

"What's your tartan?" he says. "Campbell or Ogilvie?"

"Let's see 'em," said I; and I chose a very pretty one with a lot of red in it.

"Do you belong to the Stuart clan?" says Levy.

"Och ay!" said I, having picked up a bit of the language from seeing Harry Lauder.

I wanted to take a claymore, but he said they weren't being worn this year by people shooting grouse.

"But suppose you miss the grouse with a gun?" I said. "It seems to me that a sword would come in handy."

We went up to Scotland by the night train, and, being flush, I had a sleeper—Dob went third-class with a pack of cards, and made his fare out of two Yorkshiremen, who wanted to fight him for his winnings.

In the morning I dressed in my kilt and spurring (the hairy thing that you wear

to keep your kilt tight to your knees) and though the black velvet coat and vest were a bit too big, the bonnet fitted a treat. Dob didn't know me when we met on the platform.

"Where's your bagpipes, Mr. Edwards?" he says, and I wasn't half wild. I knew Levy had forgotten something.

I must say that Glasgow seemed a rotten sort of place to me. It was full of Englishmen in trousers. I didn't see a proper Scotsman all the way up Jamaica Street.

My friend Eustace Plantaganet (that's his bookmaking name—his real name is Issy Spilliski) was in his office counting up the postal orders when we arrived.

"Come in," he says, looking at my Scotch costume. "Why, Edwards, I never thought you'd sunk so low! What whisky are you advertising?"

"I'm advertising nothing, Issy," I said quickly. "I'm going shooting—do you happen to know a bird?"

He looked at me very thoughtful.

"I do know a bird, if it's pickings you're after," he said. "Go back to your hotel and dress yourself, and then come and have a bit of breakfast. You couldn't have come at a better time."

I didn't want to change out of my Highland dress, but he said I'd be less conspicuous in trousers.

An hour later, him and me were hobnobbing over a grilled steak—Dob, being my man, always fed common at a coffee-shop.

"Now, I'll tell you what it is, Edwards," says Issy. "There's a fortune to be made if you've got the gumption."

And then he told me about a young Scotsman that he'd got in tow.

"He comes to my office regularly every week—in fact, he's one of my clients. And, Edwards, he's a good client. He never won a bet in his life! And when he bets, he bets big—'ponies' and fifties are nothing to him."

Issy looked round to see if anybody was listening.

"He's sweet on a girl in my office—a regular beauty. Personally, beauty is only skin deep to me," says Issy, "having the best wife in the world; all my money being in her name, I can't afford to take any notice of anybody else. He doesn't know that I know he's sweet on her; but I've watched him—can't keep his eyes

off her when he's talking to me. Usually he comes in once a week, has his bet, loses, and pays on the nail. Ho never sends me a bet when he's away—"

"But, Issy," I said reproachful, "surely you don't accept his money in advance for a bet? That's not legal, Issy?"

Issy said something that I can't bring myself to repeat.

"I got a bit curious about him," he went on, "so I had him tailed up. He's a clerk or something in Bingley's Bank at Perth—a clerk, and he bets in hundreds!"

I saw the significance and application of his remark. It was both sinister and interesting.

"That's very sad," I said, shaking my head. "A young man on the verge, so to speak, of his career, half-inching the dough from his good, kind employer! Very sad!"

"Edwards, you're the man to catch him!" said Issy. "If he can pinch hundreds, he can pinch thousands! And he's doing in the stuff, Edwards! One of my girls saw him motoring on Sunday, all got up to kill—and eating and drinking at the best hotels."

"What's his name?" I asked.

"Robert Fergus," said Issy. "Put that down in your notebook. He'll be at my office to-day—two o'clock punctual —and I'll introduce you."

"Why to-day?" I asked.

"Because it's the day he gets his half-holiday from the bank. Come dressed, Edwards, and we cut even. If I don't get my half share you'll know all about it!"

"A third," I said gently. "Dob gets his whack."

"Dob gets nothing," snapped Issy. "Don't try that Dob stuff on me."

To save any argument, I agreed. After all, a half or a third, what did it matter? My motto is, "What I get I keep. What I share's not worth having."

At two o'clock precisely I was in Issy's office and met this Robert Fergus. He wasn't so young as I expected—about 26. Well, but not classily dressed, and a bit nervous.

"This is my friend, Major E. Edwards, from London," said Issy. "He's just

come up to Scotland to buy an estate."

"A shooting estate," said I, "with a few moors attached and a bit of fishing. I'm a devil for fish—I eat nothing else."

"Indeed!" said the young man.

He didn't look at me. His eyes were fixed on a girl on the other side of the glass screen. And she was a peach! She was about eighteen, with a face you couldn't forget. She looked at me once, and then her eyes fell. There's very few women who can look at me twice. I don't know what it is, but there's something about me that gets 'em! Some people says it's my eyes. They're magnetic. Perhaps they're right. I don't boast about myself—far from it. To be clever is as much as one man is entitled to. To be good-looking on top of that is, so to speak, a blessing. I can't help my good looks, and what you can't help you oughtn't to boast about.

Her name was Mary Carlisle—"Bonny Mary of Carlisle" I called her, after the old Highland song.

"What are you backing to-day?" asked Issy. "You ought to have a bit on Caesar's Ghost—it's a certainty for that race at Hurst Park. I wouldn't tell you this, Mr. Fergus, only you've lost so much money to me that I'd like to put you on to a winner. Shall I put you ten pounds on?"

"If you please," said young Mr. Fergus, very grave.

We talked—or rather, I did—till the result came up. If Caesar's Ghost had won, I should have been surprised. Caesar's Ghost wouldn't beat a cab horse. Mr. Fergus paid up with a sigh, and had another bet. He betted all the afternoon and lost all the afternoon. I reckon he lost sixty pounds.

In fact, he didn't get up to go until Mary Carlisle put on her hat and went, and then he rushed down the stairs after her like a man off his head.

"He won't speak to her," said Issy; "he'll follow her home, and then he'll stand looking at the house where she lives, and then he'll catch the six o'clock train for Perth. It's love."

The next morning I left for Perth and strolled into the bank. Young Fergus was standing behind a desk, nibbling the end of his pen, when I went in, and he turned red at the sight of me.

Now, a bank clerk who bets is the easiest thing in the world to "catch." He's easier than a romantic ploughboy or a crooked Cockney. I took one look at him and I saw money in the bank—in my bank. He didn't look at me again

whilst I was changing a five-pun' note, and I didn't expect him to.

He was going to keep me for years, but I had to do it clever—and who could be cleverer than me? That's where I had the advantage over Issy. Brains. And, mind you, brains are better than good looks. To have 'em both is, as I say, a blessing.

I took lodgings in the town and wrote a soothing note to Issy. Then I sent my man Dobson to Dundee to get tickets from Hull to Rotterdam. Because, when I moved, I was going to move quick. Brains again—everything planned and timed to the minute.

I was hanging about the railway station when I saw Mr. Fergus. He came into the booking-hall and took a first-class return to Edinburgh. He didn't see me; but I was on the same train with him, and was in the same restaurant where he dined. He must have had a room in the town, for he was in. evening dress, but that didn't interest me so much as the fact that he had a gentleman with him—a real swell. I thought at first that somebody had jumped in ahead of me, but the head waiter told me that he was a lord—Lord Cliverheath. I saw the game at once—trust Elegant Edwards I This young fellow was cutting a dash, mixing with swells and pretending to be one of them.

"Who's the young fellow with his lordship?" I asked the head waiter.

"I don't know him," he said, "but one of the waiters told me that he calls himself Sir Robert Chumbley."

So that was it! I jumped to the solution in a minute. "Robert Fergus" in Glasgow, "Sir Robert Chumbley" in Edinburgh.

Seeing them coming towards me, I half turned as they passed so that Fergus could not see my face.

"I am sorry you're leaving Scotland so soon," the elderly swell—the lord—was saying, "and as to the other matter, you are, of course, your own master —"

That was all I heard. It would have been Greek to any other man. To me it was as obvious (if I might use the term) as St. Paul's on a sunny day.

This Fergus was his own master! And he was leaving Scotland!

I followed them out into the vestibule just as the cloak-room man was handing Fergus his coat. They stood talking for a long while, and then Fergus put on the coat (it was raining outside) and as he did so I saw a letter half slip from his pocket.

Now, I'm a man with a mind like lightning. No sooner did I see this letter than I walked past him, brushing him, so to speak, and in another second I was out of the hotel with the letter in my hand. Of course, it might have been nothing.

It might have been a bill. But I followed my instincts, and as soon as I put my hand on it I knew it was from a woman. There must have been ten pages of it. I went straight to my room at the little hotel where I was staying, switched on the light, locked the door and opened the letter.

Personally, love doesn't mean anything to me. I've had my affairs, as is natural in a good-looking man. But this letter was the limit. I turned at once to the back page, and there were the initials "M. C." Mary Carlisle! I tell you, I gave up my faith in women when I read that. You wouldn't think butter could melt in her mouth. That's the worst of these innocent looking ones, they're so deceptive. After the look she gave me in the office I considered it as a deliberate piece of deception to write that kind of letter to this Fergus.

About six pages were full of lovey-dovey stuff, and what would happen in the future, and how wonderful it was, and how she'd never dreamt that he could be so persistent, and how the first time she'd seen him in the office she nearly fainted.

"It is hurricane-like, isn't it? You have carried me off my feet. I never dreamt we should meet again" (so she knew him all along, the hussy!). "But if you really and truly want me—and I know you do, dear—I wall go with you. I need not give Mr. Plantaganet notice. You will forgive and understand my caprice, won't you? I will meet you, as you suggest, at King's Cross—I will come down by the night train, and will be with you on Saturday morning."

"Oh! ho!" thought I. "Now I've got you, my friend." I knew the hotel he was staying at, and I made up my mind to act, which was like me. I asked the porter if Sir Robert Chumbley was in, and after he'd telephoned through—and I'd given the name of Mr. Smith, of London—I was taken up by the page boy and shown into as magnificent a suite as you could wish to see.

He was sitting, reading a book, and at the sight of me he went very red.

"What the devil do you want?" he demanded.

"A few words," said I, closing the door behind me. "Now, Mr. Robert Fergus, I'm a plain man with plain methods—you work at a bank in Perth."

He tried to bluster, but he'd come to the wrong shop!

"My name is Sir Robert Chumbley," he said.

And then he recognized me.

"Oh, I see; you're Major Somebody or other, whom I met in that wretched bookmaker's office."

"He may be wretched and he may not be wretched," said I. "It's none of my business to inquire into the state of his feelings. All I know is, young fellow, that you're a clerk in a respectable bank, and that you're leaving the country in a few days, and if you're not taking with you half the liquid assets, then I'm a Dutchman!"

He stared at me for a moment.

"What makes you say that?" he asked.

But I wasn't in an argumentative mood. Pulling up a chair to the table where he sat, I said:

"Look here, Fergus, you're a hook and I'm a hook. You're having a good time and I'm having a bad time. I'm going to give you a few words of advice, and it won't be free. It's going to cost you twenty thousand pounds. In fact," I said, when I saw that this didn't startle him, "thirty thousand. See here, Fergus," I said more kindly, "I don't want to see you get into trouble, and I'm going to help you all I can, I don't know what is the size of your swag, but I'll bet it's pretty heavy."

"You mean the money I'm taking from the bank?" he said, like a sensible man.

"That's it," I nodded.

"How did you know I was going?" he asked after a long pause. "I thought I'd kept that pretty dark."

I smiled.

"It's not for me to talk about myself," I said; "but I can tell you, Fergus, that there's very little happens in Scotland that I don't know. You Scotch think you're sharp—I suppose you are Scotch?"

"I am a Scot," he said, and rubbed his chin.

I thought he was in a terrible state of mind. He was frowning something horrible.

"As I understand it, you want about ten to fifteen thousand pounds," he said.

"I want half your swag," I replied, more cautious. "And what's more, I'm going

to get it!"

He nodded.

"I see I'm no match for you," he said. "Meet me here to-morrow night and the money's yours."

I laughed.

"Am I a child?" I said, very gentle. "To-morrow night you're hopping it to London to meet the girl."

He paced up and down the room for a long time, and then he said:

"Meet me to-morrow night opposite the gates of Perth Gaol. I'll let you have the money, but you'll have to come and get it."

"What do you mean—'come and get it'?" I asked.

"You'll have to help me get it," said this Fergus fellow. "It's in the strong room of the bank and I can get the keys. It's either that or nothing," he said, when he saw me hesitating.

Now, I'm no burglar. I think burgling's low, but the idea of having a free hand in the strong room of a bank took my breath away. And it would be dead easy, because he didn't know me by name, and maybe he'd never recognize me.

The long and the short of it was that I agreed. After all, I could say that I was being shown round the bank by a gentleman I thought was Sir Robert Chumbley—it was easy.

It was raining when I met him next night. From what I've heard, it's always raining in Perth, except in the winter time, when it snows. I didn't mind the weather, but I hated Perth Gaol. If it's as bad inside as it looks outside, I'd rather take a chance on the real Moor. I would indeed. And it's an awkward place to wait. If a policeman sees you, you can't say that you're waiting for the doors to open or that you're expecting a friend. I was jolly glad when I saw this tall Scotsman coming up under an umbrella.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," he said, as cool as a cucumber, "but I've been shadowed by detectives. I've got an idea the bank suspects me."

I didn't say anything. In the first place, I was cold, and in the second place, I was scared. The streets were deserted—in Scotland everybody goes to bed at sunset to save matches—and we didn't meet with a soul. Reaching the bank, he opened a side door with a key, and taking a flash-lamp from his pocket, guided me into an office. Here he turned on a light.

"Nobody will see it," he said. "I had the shutters put up before I came away this evening."

"What sort of a bank is this?" says I.

"It's a private bank—one of the few in Scotland. It is called Bingley's Bank, but there isn't a Bingley in the firm now. The present proprietor, who has only recently inherited the business from his uncle, is the sort of fellow who'll let the bank go to rack and ruin. He knows no more about banking than you know about Scotland."

There was a stone stairway leading down from the room, and he unlocked the steel gate, and I followed him down.

"Do you prefer English notes or Scottish?" he asked, and I told him English.

"You'll find plenty of both kinds," he said, careless.

At the end of a narrow passage was another steel-barred gate; he opened it, and I followed him in.

"All those boxes have money in them," he said switching on a light.

I tell you my mouth watered as I looked at those boxes.

"How do you open 'em?" I began, and at that second I heard the gate crash.

When I looked round he was outside, locking it.

"Here!" I shouted. "Is that gentlemanly?"

"Very," said this Fergus. "I'm giving you the chance of your life. Good-bye, Major!"

Before I could recover myself he was up the steps and locking the second gate.

"Is this a joke?" I says. "Now, Fergus, you'd better be careful! You're only getting yourself into trouble. I know all about Miss Carlisle!"

He didn't speak for a second.

"Not all," he said; "and because I wouldn't have even a cheap London blackmailer think wrongly of her, I'll tell you that this lady and I were engaged some years ago. When her father was ruined, she ran away, and I only found her working for your thieving friend by accident. She wouldn't speak to me, though I haunted the office, losing money, in order to be near her. I betted in the name of Fergus. My name is Robert Chumbley, and I am the proprietor of this bank. You thought I was a clerk because I was doing's clerk's work, Major.

I have to learn something about banking! And, Major—I'm leaving to-night for London. You'd better explain to my manager how you got into the strong room. He may not believe you—he's one of those incredulous Scotsmen!"

VII. THE MACK PUMP

THE vulgarity of Señor Don Alfonso Callentes was apparent, and the lowliness of his origin might otherwise have escaped attention, for he spoke the curious Spanish which has currency in South America, and James Mackenzie's knowledge of Spanish was confined to such words, as "si," and "frio," and "buenos noches." Señor Callentes spoke English after a fashion, but mainly his was the language of flushing gesticulation, for his hands were dewed with diamonds, and when he flung them out in despair, or raised them to invoke his peculiar gods, there was a display of parlour fireworks that dazzled the envious beholder.

"It is zis dat I say," said Señor Callentes laboriously. "You ask me to giff you an order for machines? You are to me unknown."

Jim Mackenzie needed no reminder of this damning fact. He was unknown except to the dozen workmen he employed and the bank manager whose weekly warning came with the monotony of a tolling bell.

"I will be frank wiz you, mister," said Señor Callentes, puffing at his cigar. "When I come to zis country I prefer to deal wiz big mens. Sir Jones of Glasgow—Sir Brown of Newcastle... nobility! When I go back to my country I tell my friends and zey t'ink of me highly."

"You dirty little snob!" said Jim; but said it to himself, for Callentes was the biggest buyer of machinery in South America.

Ten minutes later he left the hotel, sick at heart, and the girl who was waiting for him outside saw his face and her heart sank as she came towards him.

"Did you have any luck, Jim?" she asked anxiously.

He shook his head with a smile.

"I don't know whether you would call it luck—but he is going to Scotland to-morrow, and he has promised to come and see the works. That will settle him! When he sees the old shed and the miserable equipment we have, he'll cut me out."

"But, Jim, the pump is the best on the market," she protested. "What does anything else matter?"

He smiled grimly.

"It matters a lot to him. He's an outrageous little snob and only wants to do business with swells. I know that he is buying pumps, and such an order as he could give me would put me on my feet. As it is, it looks as though my excursion into the realms of engineering is a ghastly error, and the sooner I get back to my job on the Megaphone the better!"

Jim Mackenzie had left college with a science degree and a qualification in engineering, and, like many other men whose vocations had been disturbed by the war, had drifted to London journalism until the prospects in his own profession grew brighter. A small legacy had enabled him to realize the ambitions of his life, and the tiny Clyde factory, where the Mack Pump had evolved from dreams into a reality, was the result.

To May Ellercombe the success of that microscopic business meant everything in the world. Her pretty face was clouded as she walked by his side.

"If I only knew a lord!" he moaned. "One miserable little duke!"

"How can a duke be miserable?" she asked scornfully.

As they reached the corner of the block, an elegant gentleman stepped down from a taxicab, paid the driver with a languid air, and stood on the kerb to allow them to pass. He was of middle height and slim, but his inches were so perfectly apparelled that he had no perceptible dimensions. From the crown of his glossy silk hat to the tips of his gleaming shoes he might have served as the perfect model for an artist engaged in illustrating a tailor's catalogue.

Staring after the couple, he did not hear the indignant expostulations of the cabman;

"A coincidence, by jove!" he murmured, and then became aware that the taxi-driver was speaking in tones of despair and protest.

"Here, guv'nor, this is the exact fare!"

Elegant Edward Smith turned his pained eyes upon the man.

"Would you have less, child?" he asked reproachfully. "From the Bachelors Club to Haymarket is one and sixpence."

"Bachelors Club!" sneered the cabman, jerking up his flag viciously. "Been to call on your blinking father, I suppose!"

Elegant Edward made no reply to the insult.

He was not a member of the Bachelor Club—or of any club except the Rat Hole in Soho—but it pleased him to take his cabs from the portals of high-class establishments. There was always a chance that a possible victim might observe the occurrence, to his profit.

He passed through the doors of the Northern and Southern Bank, and approached his favourite cashier with an engaging smile.

"Good morning," he said.

The cashier eyed him coldly.

"Good morning, Mr. Smith," he replied. "What can I do for you?"

Elegant Edward produced a pocket-book, which he opened with great care and extracted a cheque.

"I think this is in order," he said as he pushed it under the grille.

The cashier looked at the slip of paper and shook his head.

"Your account is eighteen shillings overdrawn, Mr. Smith," he said, "and I cannot cash this."

Elegant Edward's eyebrows rose.

"Overdrawn?" he said incredulously.

"I wrote to you last week, telling you it was overdrawn," said the patient cashier. "In fact, two letters have gone to you.".

"Then it will come to-day," said Edward, and his smile was dazzling. "A hundred thousand francs! I sold my property on the Riviera last week, and it is very annoying that the money hasn't turned up. In the meantime"—he pushed the cheque forward, but the cashier shook his head.

"It can't be done, Mr. Smith," he said, and turned to another client.

Elegant Edward walked slowly out of the bank. He had fourteen pounds in cash, which he had procured by his own ingenuity at Hurst Park races, and there was no tragedy in the situation. He had not mentioned the cheque for £100 that he had placed to his credit a week before, and that had been stopped by the drawer, though he had had some hope that the hard-hearted man from whom he had won this trifling sum at cards, would have withdrawn his veto. And tactfully the cashier had also omitted any reference to that incident.

As he walked down the steps into the street, a tall, bronzed man stood squarely in his path. Elegant Edward would have passed him by with a vacant stare, but the gentleman evidently intended that the meeting should not be avoided.

"Good morning, Smith," he said pleasantly, and Edward turned with a start.

"Hullo, Inspector, how are you?"

He held out his hand, which apparently Inspector Wells did not see.

"What are you doing?" asked Wells pleasantly.

"I've just been to see my banker."

"Oh, you have, have you?" said the other with a grim smile. "And I've been looking for you for two days, Edward."

"For me?" said Elegant Edward in well-feigned surprise. "Whatever are you wanting with me, child?"

"And not so much of the child," snarled the detective. "You caught a mug with the broads for a century—now don't deny it! He stopped the kite and made a complaint to us. You go steady, Smith, or I'll have you inside."

A look of utter weariness settled upon Elegant Edward's face.

"This is evidently another case of mistaken identity," he said. "And really, Inspector, I don't understand your language. What is a 'mug'? Do you mean a foolish person? And a 'kite' and 'broads'—do I understand that you are speaking of a cheque won at cards?"

"By 'mug' I mean 'mug,' and you'll be a mug unless you clear out of town within the next twenty-four hours," said the Inspector.

Elegant Edward smiled.

"As a matter of fact, I'm going up to Scotland for the shooting," he said carelessly. "They tell me the grouse are very plentiful this year."

"If you go to Scotland for the shooting," said the Inspector, "you'd better wear armour, Edward, for the only bird that will be shot will be you!"

"The Scotch or Scottish are assuredly a parsimonious race," said Elegant Edward, daintily dusting a speck of cigar-ash from his well-creased trousers. "That much I grant. But experience has taught me that credulity and gullibility go hand in hand."

"You don't half use classy words!" said the admiring Alfred Oakes.

Not least of Alf's duties was to admire.

Elegant Edward, with his smart apparel, his high, narrow forehead and his tiny black moustache was, to all appearance, a most self-sufficient man. Yet admiration was the breath of his nostrils and approval the sunlight of his chequered life.

He sat in the corner of the saloon bar—The Green Dragon, near Hampstead Heath, was his favourite rendezvous—his silk hat pushed back from his forehead, his yellow gloves neatly laid out on the marble-topped table.

"This Mackenzie," he went on, "will be easy. He is what they term a captain of industry, I think. He has factories and dockyards extending the full length of the Clyde."

"Where's that?" asked Alfred.

"I don't know," admitted Elegant Edward; "but I'm only giving you what the landlady of the hotel in Bloomsbury Square gave me. The mere fact that he lives cheap, in London shows he's rich. The richer a Scotsman gets, the cheaper he lives. You and I, child, will have caviar and peaches for breakfast because we can't afford it. Millionaire Mackenzie will have three flakes of oatmeal and a large glass of water. And if I don't catch him before the train pulls in to Glasgow village, my name is not Elegant Edward."

"Excuse me, Mr. Smith," said Alf, "but where did you get that name?"

"It was given to me by the Press," said Edward complacently. "I got into a little trouble over a matter which is neither here nor there, and one of these flash reporters put a headline over the paragraph 'Elegant Edward.' And mind you, child, it's not a bad name; it is something to live up to. Often, while creasing my trousers and wondering whether it is worth the trouble, the memory of that headline comes to me and spurs me on, so to speak, to deeds of emulation. Mackenzie goes by the morning train to save paying for a sleeping berth, and if he doesn't go third-class I'm a Dutchman."

But it was into a first-class carriage on the following morning that Mr. Mackenzie ushered his possible client.

"This is Miss Ellercombe," he introduced the girl a little nervously.

May Ellercombe had insisted upon accompanying the party to Glasgow. She was a stenographer in a lawyer's office, and this little trip would come out of her Christmas holiday, but she was determined to leave no stone unturned to secure the order which would make all the difference in the world to her and to the man she loved.

"The Spaniards are susceptible to feminine charms, Jim," she said calmly to the horrified young man, "and if I can charm him into giving that order, I am going to do it."

Señor Callentes was a stout, gross man with a touch of choler in his composition, and if indeed he was susceptible to feminine influence, it was at a later hour than nine o'clock in the morning. In truth, on that particular morning he was not susceptible at all, for overnight he had quarrelled with the slim Brazilian lady who was all in all to him, and she had departed for Paris by the early train.

He grunted a greeting, complained, in his broken English, of the length of the journey, and before the train had pulled out of King's Cross, had expressed an earnest wish that he had gone to Paris instead.

Jim groaned inwardly as he recognized the almost insurmountable barrier which stood between him and his fortune. If he could not get Señor Callentes in a good humour before the train reached Glasgow, then his chance of impressing that lover of the nobility was very slight indeed.

The train was running through the outskirts of Peterborough when there walked along the corridor a stylish and distinguished man, who halted opposite the carriage and stared through the window. In another instant the door was jerked open, and Elegant Edward, hat in hand, stepped through the doorway, his hand extended.

"My dear Mackenzie!" he said warmly, taking the astonished Jim's reluctant hand. "Well, this is a pleasure. You remember me?"

"I'm afraid—" began Jim.

"Why, of course you do!" bluffed Edward. "You remember Lord Staggatt? Confound it, child, your memory is dithering!"

There are in the English peerage half-a-dozen titles held by men who have never claimed or used them. There is an American baron; somewhere in the wilds of Australia, the owner of the earldom of Cleith—a fact which will be known to every reader of Snippetty Bits. The Earldom of Staggatt was one which had been often revived by Elegant Edward for his own purpose.

The effect upon Señor Callentes was electric. His beady eyes opened, his huge mouth gaped.

"This is my friend, Señor Callentes," said Jim with such deliberation that the girl wondered.

Elegant Edward took in the South American with one comprehensive glance, and, as he looked, his mouth watered. There were, he mentally noticed, two thousand pounds' worth of precious stones on each hand; in Señor Callentes' black satin cravat was a pearl which could not be bought in the open market for five thousand pounds. Edward almost swooned.

One glance told him the nationality of Jim Mackenzie's companion, and his heart leapt, for amongst his many accomplishments was a knowledge of Spanish, acquired in the prison of Toledo, when he underwent a sentence of twelve months at the instigation of the British Consul for participation in the Spanish prisoner swindle.

He felt he was on safe ground as he smiled broadly at the beaming Callentes.

"Callentes?" he said. "Are you any relation to the Duc de Callentes?"

He seated himself by the delighted Spaniard's side and plunged into the biography of Callentes known, but mainly unknown.

"Who is he?" asked the girl in an undertone.

Jim walked out into, the corridor and she followed him.

"Jim, how wonderful! The very thing you wanted to happen! You only said this morning that, if you knew a few lords, it would be child's play to get your order."

"Yes, I did, didn't I?"said Jim, stroking his chin thoughtfully.

"But you do know Lord Staggatt?"

"Not from a crow," said Jim calmly, and she gasped.

"But, Jim, if he discovers his mistake won't it be awfully serious?"

"There won't be any time to discover it. And, besides"—he hesitated — "I have an idea our friend will not go the whole journey with us. At every station he has been poking out his head for a telegram, and I rather fancy he expects to be called back, because he told me this morning he had had a terrific quarrel with his fiancée and that they had parted for ever—which means that they may be reconciled at any minute."

She looked at him awe-stricken.

"Then it means that, if you don't get the order signed—"

"It is extremely unlikely," said Jim, and he went back in time to hear "Lord

Staggatt" offering an enthusiastic invitation to his new-found friend.

Jim's Spanish was poor, but he caught the drift of the conversation.

"My dear friend, the next time you come to England you must stay with me at Crock Park," said Elegant Edward enthusiastically. "It will honour me. You must come and see my deer—the best in England."

"You are too kind, my noble friend," beamed Callentes.

"I insist," said Elegant Edward. "I will invite you to shoot with me. All that I have is at your disposition."

"My nobility, you are magnificent," babbled the delighted Spaniard.

It was at Carlisle that the telegram came. Callentes tore it open, read, and his face lit up.

"I must return immediately to London," he said. "It is of all things most unfortunate. As for your pumps, my dear Mackenzie, I will buy them. Six hundred of the smaller size you wanted to sell? Ah, well, you must send me the order."

"I have it here," said Jim instantly, producing a written slip of paper.

For a second Callentes was taken back, and then he gurgled humorously.

"Ah! The Scotch are so quickly-business-like!"

He scrawled his signature with a fountain-pen and then, after Jim had assisted him to push his hand baggage through the window, he turned to Elegant Edward.

"My friend, we shall meet again. You shall come to me in London at—"

"I'll come now," said Elegant Edward promptly. "Immediately. I will not leave you. You are of all men most amiable."

Callentes' back was turned to Jim and he did not see the furious contortions of the engineer's face.

"You're coming on to Glasgow, aren't you, Lord Staggatt?" said Jim, and his eyes met the other's. "You have an appointment, you know, and we can easily return to London by the midnight train."

"My dear fellow—" began the elegant one haughtily, and Jim winked.

The train was well out of Carlisle when Jim Mackenzie went along the

corridor and found Elegant Edward sitting in the corner of a third-class carriage, his arms folded, a scowl upon his thin face.

"Sorry to spoil your little scheme, my friend," said Jim.

"Now look here," said Edward indignantly, "what the deuce do you mean by squinting and blinking at me behind my friend's back? By heavens, for two pins I'd—"

"Be calm," said Jim soothingly. "I've done you a very good turn."

"And I've done you one, confound you," said Edward wrathfully.

"For which I will pay you."

"Pay me!" Elegant's nose wrinkled scornfully. "Pay me, sir! Pay the Earl of Staggatt!"

Jim chuckled softly.

"Come off that horse of yours," he said. "Your name is Edward Smith, and you were once called, by an enterprising reporter, 'Elegant Edward.' I happen to know—because I was the re porter! Now suppose we settle this matter amicably. Would twenty pounds soothe your ruffled feelings?"

"Twenty pounds!" said Edward with contempt. "Have a heart, child. A hundred wouldn't be too much."

"Nor fifty, too little," said Jim as he took out his case and counted out the notes.

THE END